

The Little Book of

**sinclair**

**ZX Spectrum**

Games

Chris Wilkins



sinclair



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Thanks to Oliver Frey for the use of his Crash cover artwork.



# foreword<sup>1</sup>

As a youngster growing up near the seaside arcades in West Wales, I was totally captivated by the sounds, colours and playability of the games that appeared in the two establishments I used to frequent as an early teenager. I could not afford to have more than one or two goes on the games each visit, so used to watch the tourists that visited the seaside resort play them with their holiday money instead.

Christmas 1983 was quite special for me – Santa brought me a brand new 48K Spectrum with the games *Manic Miner* and *Lunar Jetman*. Having this computer meant that I could play games in my bedroom again and again and not be restricted by the coins in my pocket. Many of those games that I saw in the arcades appeared on the Spectrum – be it clones like *Planetoids* or fully licenced conversions like *Spy Hunter* or *Out Run*. In addition there were a huge number of original games of all genres released in the five to six years that the Sinclair Spectrum reigned supreme here in the UK.

Collecting games in the playground became a hobby – the currency at the time was C90 tapes full of the latest titles, and by golly did I, rightly or

wrongly, have a few of those. This book contains all the games I fondly remember playing on the Sinclair machine. These are my games – the ones I hold dear to my heart and think of when reminiscing on the golden days of computing and gaming.

I am sure many of the games in these pages, well over 120, will rekindle memories for you as well. I am also certain that some of your favourites will not be included either – please forgive me if that is the case. The games are split into genres, and any avid Crash magazine readers are sure to recognise the amazing artwork that separates each section – this cover art was of course created by Oliver Frey.

I hope you enjoy the book – if you fancy a more in depth look at the ZX Spectrum then please take a look at the three volumes of 'The story of the Sinclair ZX Spectrum in pixels'\_ that can be found on our site –  
**[www.fusionretrobooks.com](http://www.fusionretrobooks.com)**

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chris Wilkins". The signature is fluid and cursive, with "Chris" on the top line and "Wilkins" on the bottom line, slightly overlapping.

Chris Wilkins, August 2016.



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2010

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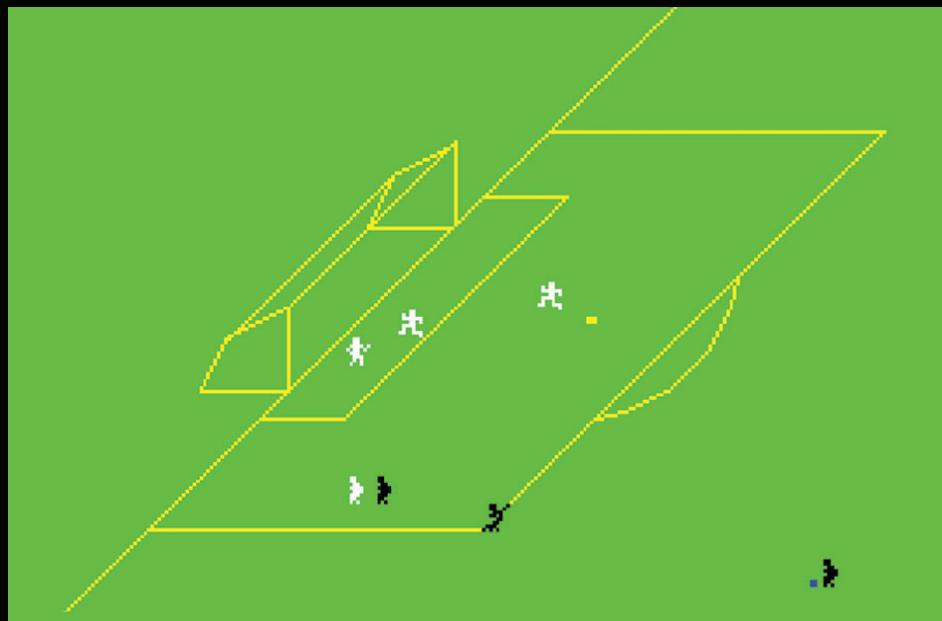
2010

# **SPORTS Games**

48K



n/a



When looking back at the origins of the football simulator, it can be said with some degree of certainty that this game is where it all began. The player's challenge is to ascend a team from the 1982 Football League to the top of the league. By mixing up the skills of the squad before kick-off, the game plays out glorious stick-o-vision highlights that demonstrate the graphical prowess of the early Spectrum games. Your bumbling striker slowly moves towards the goal and if you are lucky, your man scores and it's back to the main menu to start the whole process again. If he doesn't score...well you get the picture. *Football Manager* can still to this day hold your interest for short blasts.

**Game:** Hyper Sports **Publisher:** Imagine Software **Year:** 1985



**H**yper Sports plays a similar game to *Daley Thompson's Decathlon* but does so with a cheeky wink and a comedic stride. The same joystick waggle gets your moustached 70s athlete trundling down the swim lane, or down the running track. There are a variety of events in *Hyper Sports* that require a little more strategy and timing over Daley and doing well in them is extremely satisfying. Take the archery for example – timing your shot and getting the angle just right is rewarded with the 'NICE' speech bubble that just makes you glow inside, followed by your athlete jumping up and down with glee as he celebrates your success. *Hyper Sports*, based on the Konami original arcade game, is the best of class on the ZX Spectrum.

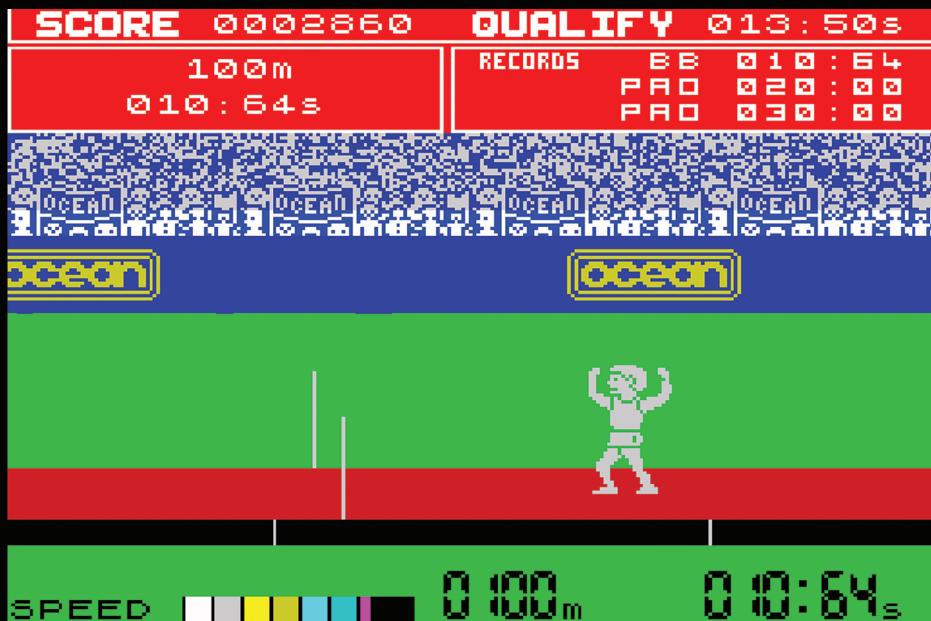
**Game:** Match Point **Publisher:** Sinclair Research **Year:** 1984

48K

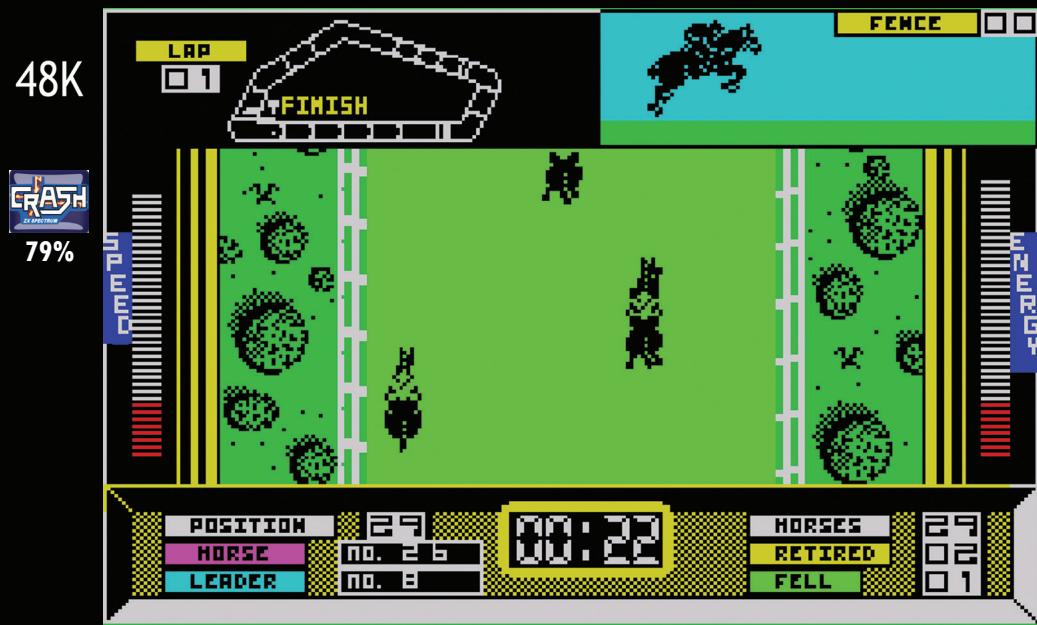


When talk of Wimbledon comes around on the TV you know that Summer has just arrived and that the finest athletes of this prestigious gentleman's club are about to descend on the South East of London. *Match Point* is a great representation of the tennis sport and allows you, as the player, to get some well needed practice via an exhibition match or to jump in and play in a competition. Selecting the skill level changes the aggressiveness of your opponent considerably. Familiarity of the controls enables you to add speed, direction and accuracy to each of your shots and eventually win your first game. With the smell of freshly cut grass in the air, lifting that trophy in front of royalty will soon be within your grasp.

**Game:** Daley Thompson's Decathlon **Publisher:** Ocean Software **Year:** 1984



Daley Thompson was a British National Hero back in 1984 and this Ocean game paid tribute to a good number of the events that he competed in at the Los Angeles Olympics. The mechanics and look of the game were derived from the popular *Track and Field* game that was riding high in the arcades at the time. Many a Quickshot joystick was broken by the avid bedroom athlete as they 'waggled' their stick left and right willing Daley to go faster. The events presented added a little variety to the running formula where pressing the fire button determined the angle of attack, throw or jump. Daley is given three chances to qualify on each event – success sees the crowd roar as the main man takes one step closer to Olympic Gold.



Simplistic horse racing games had appeared before *Grand National*. There was even a listing you typed in from a popular Spectrum magazine of the day that represented horses with asterisks and bets were placed on which one would cross the finish line first. *Grand National* does go one step further by allowing the player to pick, and then control their horse, adjusting the speed by using a whip. Hedges and competitors have to be negotiated, as you aim to get 'Shergar' to the finish line first and take your winnings before wearing out his hide with all the whipping. Graphically, the best looking horse racing game on the Spectrum – but not much of a game here once you look under the glossy exterior.



With the limited palette of the Spectrum, depicting the green ball on a green table was always going to be a challenge! The actual game of snooker, with balls bouncing off cushions and each other, is represented well, and once the mechanics of the game are mastered, nice breaks can be achieved. With Kirk Stevens and Hurricane Higgins regularly hogging the family TV in the 80s, budding snooker players could hone their cueing skills in their bedroom and replicate the shots of their sporting heroes. Screwing the white back to bounce off the top cushion to get position to pot the pink are all actions that are possible – just like in the real game – now for that 147 break!

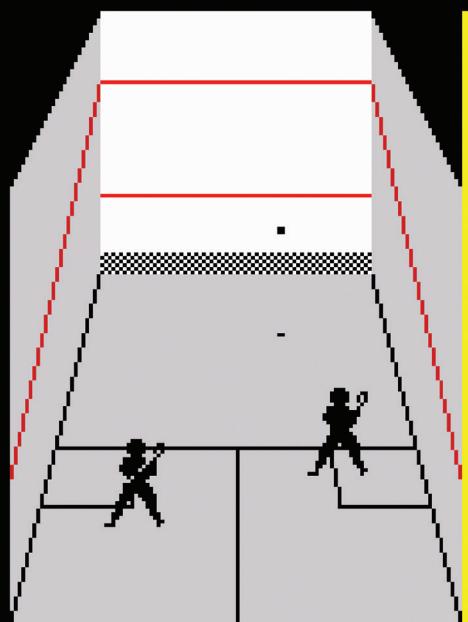
48K



80%



**L**eaderboard is the king of the golf simulations on the Spectrum. Graphically and sonically it lacks the instant impressive look of the Commodore 64 original, yet doesn't want for any of its playability. After selecting how many players (up to four could play) and choosing names, it's off to the links and either an 18-hole round or a full 72-hole tournament. There are four different courses offering a variety of hazards and a comprehensive range of clubs at your disposal. Playing a shot is simple: point the cursor in the direction you want the ball to go, and press fire to play – releasing the fire button at the top of your swing gives you maximum power. Fortunately a wind-less easy mode is on offer for us amateurs!



Malcolm Evans' New Generation Software only released one licensed game, and while squash may be an uncommon subject for the Spectrum, Evans himself made a decent effort in recreating the racquet sport. The game itself boils the sport's complexities to a predictably straightforward, yet playable interpretation. Players take turn serving and a backhand or forehand shot is determined by the position of the player in relation to the ball. The timing of the player's swing affects the speed, and all this is achieved by merely pressing the fire button. Perhaps the most famous part of the game was its speech which was created using a technique called 'Reprosound'.

48K



91%



**M**atch Day II quickly established itself as one of the best football games on the ZX Spectrum. To cut down on the strain on the computer the number of players on each team was reduced to seven, which worked really well as the playing field never got too busy. The game provided a very fair trade-off between realism and playability and was one of the first footy games that delivered complete control over the ball and realistic rebound effects when the ball struck a footballer. The Spectrum gamer did not have to like football to enjoy this game or wear a 70s Kevin Keegan-style perm as sported by the detailed white and yellow players on screen! A classic game of two halves.

Game: World Series Baseball Publisher: Imagine Software Year: 1985



Compete against another human or the Spectrum itself and take turns batting or pitching in this competent but yawn-worthy rendition of the American take on rounders. The playing field is clearly rendered in an almost top-down fashion but the main action takes place on the 'video screen' above. Here, the batter and pitcher are shown in some detail with pitch angle and timing of strike being the player-controllable elements. Whilst fielding down on the pitch you only get to control whichever tiny player the computer deems closest to the action. Cheerleaders pop on for a quick dance and the video screen shows ads for real stores, adding some interest to proceedings, but alas not enough to save you from what is ultimately a tedious game.

**Game:** Barry McGuigan's Boxing **Publisher:** Gamestar **Year:** 1985

48K



Based on the boxing exploits of the famous Clones Cyclone, Activision, with *Barry McGuigan's Boxing*, created the complete boxing arcade simulation. Once your fighting name is chosen, along with your boxing style and your training regime, you launch your career as either a newcomer or top 10 ranked fighter. The action is viewed side on and the tactic during a fight is to keep an eye on your stamina while making direct hits to the body and head of the opposition – ultimately knocking them out cold! The game is stylishly presented and still plays well today as you strive to become the world's number one. A much more tactical game than its nearest competition, *Frank Bruno's Boxing*.

**Game:** Ping Pong **Publisher:** Imagine Software **Year:** 1986

**PL 1:** 50 HIGH SCORE  
0200000



Based on a Konami arcade game, *Ping Pong* on the Spectrum is an excellent and playable game from Imagine, the label by then owned by Ocean. It presents the action in pseudo-3D view with floating bats at each end and the rules are simple: first player to 11 points wins the round with a change of serve after each one. The bats automatically track the ball, meaning the player can concentrate on which shot to play, the timing of it and whether to use backhand or forehand. Two shots can be played, a drive and a smash, with a lob resulting should you or your opponent mis-time either. *Ping Pong* is immense fun, initially easy to master but a devil to beat on the CPU's higher levels.



**B**inary Design are the eminent team behind this rendition of darts which does a pretty good job of bringing the arrow wielding pub duel to your computer screen. Choose from one player with computer opponents, two player, or practice which sees you playing a game of 'round the clock'. The detailed graphics consist of a large dartboard, with a throwing hand which continuously moves in four directions whilst 'waggling' the dart, meaning timing has to be spot on both for position and angle of the dart itself. A side-on view of the action ensues when the computer has its turn at throwing. Out of the handful of darts games on offer, *180* by M.A.D comes out on (double?) tops.

Game: Formula One Publisher: CRL Year: 1985



Management games aren't restricted to football it seems and *Formula One* by CRL is an unfortunate testament to this fact. No driving skills required here as you set about managing a season for your chosen team. Assaulted by a bewildering array of options from the off – you must pick your team, driver, sponsors, car setup and more all whilst watching the bank balance. Racing starts after navigating multiple menus; you then get to sit back and watch the race unfold lap by lap. Keeping you informed of the consequences of your previous choices are lines of commentary on the bottom of the screen. Sadly, apart from seeing a few crudely rendered cars flash by, this is about as exciting as this game gets.

**Sinclair**  
**ZX Spectrum**



## ZX Spectrum 16K / 48K

The ZX Spectrum was launched in 1982 and was based on the Zilog Z80 processor. The original model had 16KB of Random Access Memory and retailed for £125 – 48KB models soon followed for a whopping £175. The Spectrum sported a distinct rubber keyed keyboard with a large expansion bay for connecting popular peripherals like the ZX Printer and Interface 1 / ZX Microdrive.





# **arcade adventure**

48K



93%



This would be Wally Week's swan song as he retired from the gaming scene forever. Developer Mikro-Gen beautifully aped the growing trend for British holidaymakers to descend on some quaint European resort and set about turning it into Blackpool without the rain. But Wally gets a holiday he wasn't expecting. The locals (read natives) have snatched his family and plan on turning them into a hearty meal. So you once again step up as Wally and embark on a hilarious adventure to prevent you and your kinfolk from becoming lunch. The average Speccy gamer was growing up, and Mikro-Gen understood this. Humour needed to be more salacious, and cut a fraction closer to the bone – *Three Weeks in Paradise* sure did deliver.



Many a budding bedroom programmer would look at the games coming out of the Ultimate Play The Game sausage factory with envy – every game had been a surefire hit, and there was nothing to suggest that future sausages would not taste as good. *Starquake* gives a nod and a wink to the style, presentation and playability of a typical Ultimate game and sees B.L.O.B. (Bio-Logically Operated Being) crash land his ship on an unknown world – destabilising it. To save it from destruction B.L.O.B. has to find pieces of the planet core that have been scattered around the 512 screens of a graphically impressive planet. Sounds easy doesn't it! A tough game with clever puzzles.

SCORE : 936

Rescued : 1

48K



85%



**A**nt Attack was arguably the first 3D world created on the ZX Spectrum. The game lets you choose to be the hero or heroine and it's with some intrepid urgency you go in search of your loved one, kidnapped whilst on their travels in Antescher. The name of the city itself gives a clue to the inhabitants of this walled fortress – huge ants that home in on you for a bite when you get close. When you find the love of your life, it's a matter of shouting 'Follow me!' before racing towards the exit with your partner in tow. *Ant Attack* is a technical marvel on the ZX Spectrum introducing never before seen 3D environments – often let down by awkward controls that cause problems in the heat of the moment.



With *Avalon*, the promise of a 3D adventure casting you as the hero in the latest Indie-type blockbuster was an invitation that could not be passed. The game came in a video cassette style box and on opening, out fell an obligatory adventurer's map and a set of instructions suggesting that the game was a little more complex than it actually was. Maroc the Wizard had to be guided through some pseudo 3D rooms in search of Lord Chaos in order to kill him. Spells and the like are collected to aid the journey. The 3D rooms flicker in motion sickness inducing fashion as you float Maroc through each one. *Avalon* is an early cinematic adventure that certainly lives up to its brash promises.

48K



94%



Ultimate Play The Game stir a myriad of emotional connections dating back to the golden years of the 8-bit home computer revolution. An unsaturated market enabled an array of truly innovative games to be developed that pushed both design and technological boundaries. Ultimate were renowned for the secrecy surrounding their titles. Due to this clever strategy, anticipation for any Ultimate game was immense. The year was 1984, *Knight Lore* had been unleashed and Sabreman was back for his third instalment! It resembled nothing that had been played before. The groundbreaking isometric graphics were just spellbinding and created a genre that would be defined in history forever.

Game: Nodes of Yesod Publisher: Odin Computer Graphics Year: 1985



Charlemagne Fotheringham-Grunes is hearing strange signals coming from the moon and decides to go and investigate. So he grabs his space helmet and catches the number 73 Space Shuttle to the cheesy planet where he meets up with his mate Lunar Mole. Together they explore the moon's surface in search of eight crystal keys. Now Neil Armstrong on his visit back in '69 never mentioned bumping into such creatures as teddy bears on springs, mechanical tortoises or worse still, space muggers who relieve him of any crystals he may have collected. Well that is the challenge Charlemagne faces, as you guide him through the huge number of locations, solving puzzles as you go.

16K



**A**s developers go, none were as replete with mystique as Ultimate. Questions about the unreleased Sabreman adventure *Mire Mare* prevail to this day and there's uncertainty about the authorship of some of its games too. Who programmed *Pentagram* and *Martianoids* for example? *Tranz Am* also poses problems. We assume it was coded by Chris Stamper, except it's absolutely nothing like any other Ultimate game. Instead, it's a top down scrolling racer with you tearing up a barren wasteland in search of eight coveted trophies. Enemy racers are in pursuit and with no guns you must either lose them or cause them to crash. You have to refuel as racing rages on through the night. 16K carnage.

**Game:** The Pyramid **Publisher:** Fantasy Software **Year:** 1983



Coded by Bob Hamilton and published by Fantasy, *The Pyramid* is a flick-screen game with the lead character, Ziggy, enclosed within a strange bubble-like craft that continually descends unless its thrusters are activated. In a plot heavily influenced (read: stolen) from *The Hitchhiker's Guide To The Galaxy*, Ziggy has reached the titular Pyramid in an effort to discover the answer to Life, the Universe and Everything. To do so, he must descend through the structure zapping the 60 different types of enemy and collect the crystals that enable him to break the doors to the level below. *The Pyramid* bolts a crazy plot onto a *Jetpac*-like shooting game, the result of which is limited arcade fun.

48K



92%



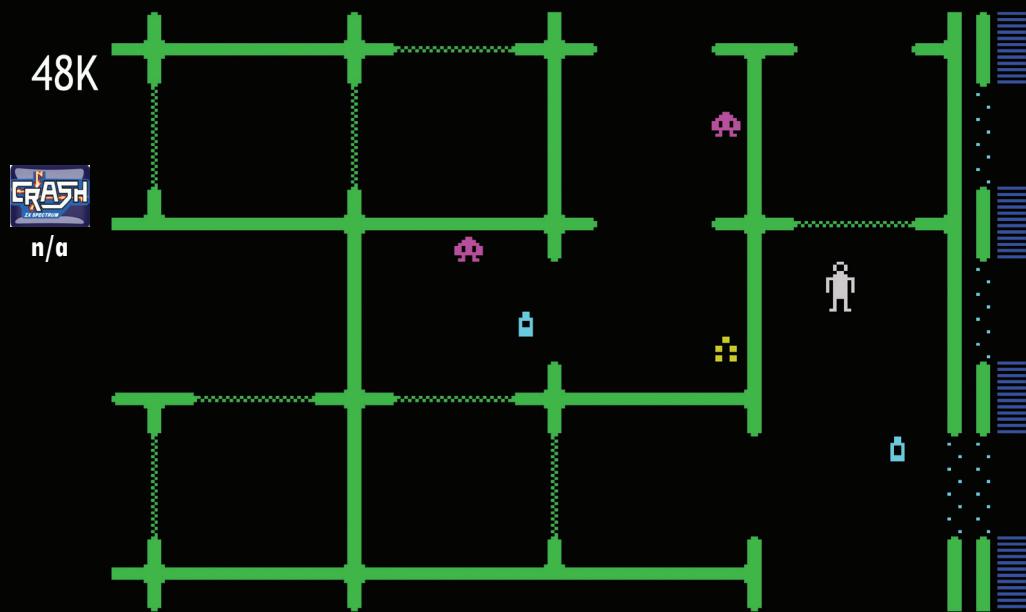
central plain

There are not many games on the Spectrum where the hero is 56 pixels high and utilises 64 different frames of animation. Take a play of *Tir Na Nog* and you will be introduced to the hero who goes by the name of 'Cuchulainn' – he is an absolute graphical wonder on the 8-bit machine and explores a magical land of Celtic mythology in search of the fragments of the Seal of Calum. The game has splendid parallax scrolling and animated backgrounds that help to immerse the player in a strange and beautiful land filled with characters, the names of which can only be pronounced after quaffing a flagon of mead. A game full of abstract puzzles that test the player. *Tir Na Nog's* sequel is *Dun Darach*.

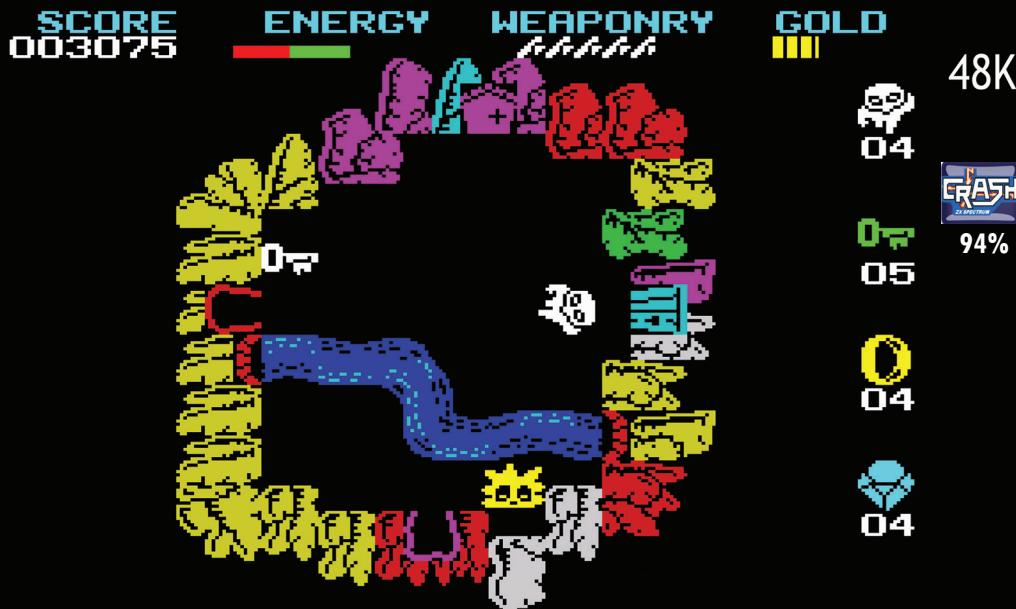
**Game:** Doomdark's Revenge **Publisher:** Beyond Software **Year:** 1984



Mike Singleton kept the storyline flowing with this masterpiece, the follow up to *The Lords of Midnight*. In an atrocious act of retaliation for her father's death, Shareth the Heartstealer has kidnapped your son Morkin and taken him north through the Gate of Varenorm. In this epic quest it is up to you and your merry band of war ravaged men to go forth and defeat Shareth, thus releasing the imprisoned Morkin. *Doomdark's* expanded dramatically from its predecessor, using the full potential of the landscaping technique – there are tunnels, palaces, a myriad of characters to bump into, a much larger map to explore and the dreaded rolling fog of war. Another excellent game from the late Mike Singleton.



**H**alls of the Things is the creation of three university students from Manchester. Disappointed with what they perceived to be inferior types of games, the three brainstormed ideas which resulted in what, in 1983, was a highly innovative game for several reasons. Firstly, a huge map that could be explored freely, a real bonus in an era where many games were still single-screen. Secondly, enemies exist off-screen and wander around regardless of the player; and thirdly, the enemies have the same weapons as the player, increasing the challenge further. *Halls of the Things* was an outstanding success for Crystal and their biggest hit by some distance on the ZX Spectrum.



When *Wizard's Lair* was released and went out to review, it suffered due to its overwhelming visual similarity to *Atic Atac*. Gamers of the day just couldn't see past the blatant cloning, and struggled to appreciate its unique charms. Viewed from above, the game was vibrantly colourful and full of detail as you, Pothole Pete, attempted to find a way out of the titular wizard's lair. It featured a number of unique elements, not least of which being able to move up and down through the levels of the lair using lifts, and wardrobes. The game will always remain in the shadow of games it borrowed from, but still deserves its own recognition as an addictive, colourful romp.



**arcade**

48K

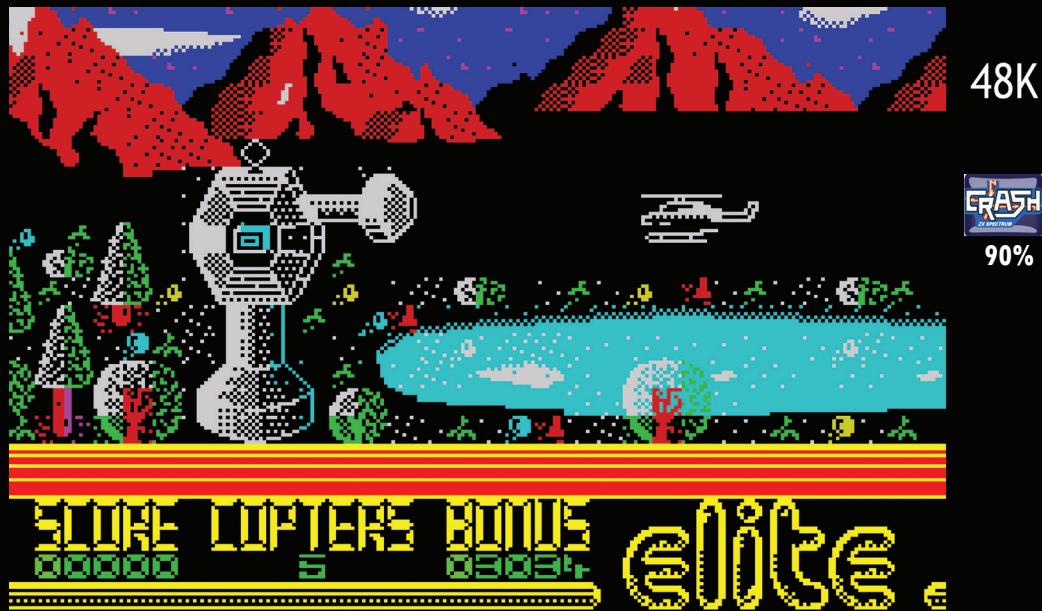


79%



A conversion of the C64 hit game from Access, *Beach-Head* on the Spectrum was a joint effort between US Gold and Ocean. The game follows the original closely and features several different types of level, something of a rarity in 1984. The player has to guide their fleet towards the enemy, either directly or via a 'secret passage'. Another stage requires careful negotiation of rocks, mines and torpedoes before your fleet is assaulted by enemy planes in a first person view. After fending off the fighters, it's time to have a pop at the enemy fleet, but quickly as they are firing back, the cads! *Beach-Head* isn't a complex game, but it's fun and easy to see why it was such a hit in 1984.

Game: Airwolf Publisher: Elite Systems Year: 1985



48K

CRASH  
ZX SPECTRUM

90%

**B**ack in 1984, the *Airwolf* license was a big thing for a relatively small publisher such as Elite – the TV series was extremely popular among the ZX Spectrum's demographic of young teenagers. Coded by Elite's Richard Wilcox himself, it's actually a decent effort although *Airwolf* has become notorious over the years as one of the toughest games on the Spectrum. Playing pilot Stringfellow Hawk, the CIA have called you in to rescue five missing scientists who are being held hostage in a heavily-fortified underground base. The sheer size of the helicopter plus the steep difficulty curve deterred many gamers, causing many to quit the game in frustration – stick at it though and some enjoyment does eventually come your way.

16K



n/a

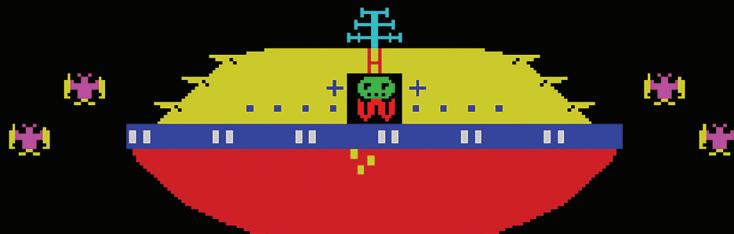


D k'Tronics' *3D Tanx* has a simple premise – kill or be killed. As the game starts you find yourself manning a powerful artillery unit with the ability to move the weapon left or right and its turret up and down. Pressing fire sees a shell fire off into the pseudo 3D landscape and land on a distant bridge. So far nothing too life threatening. From the right a lone tank comes into view and turns its turret and locks on you. BANG – a shot is fired. Quickly you move to the left to dodge the incoming missile. You fire back – a direct hit disables the enemy. You fire again – the tank is destroyed. You dodge; you fire; you are awarded points; you die. War has never been this much fun!

003200 ♫ ♫

HIGH 000750 LI

16K



n/a



Memories of seeing the arcade game *Phoenix* for the first time are vivid – it was in the foyer of the local cinema in Carmarthen in West Wales. I used to hover around the machine watching some of the local teens playing the game and impressing the girls – I was captivated. I daren't play that cabinet for fear of not being very good and humiliating myself in front of the opposite sex. The release of *Pheenix* (see what they did there) on the Spectrum was the answer to my woes – I could practice this faithful reproduction of the game in private and hone my skills. By the time I was good, and confident, enough to go public – the cinema had replaced *Phoenix* with the next big name and my opportunity was lost.



There was talk going around the school playground regarding a new arcade game released for the Commodore 64 – this was the next game to get if you owned the beige competitor. The chatter turned some weeks later to the possibility of a Spectrum version – could it really be done? The C64 fans thought not. Dominic Robinson went down in gaming history for his Spectrum conversion of *Uridium* and arguably created a game that is as good, if not better, than its brethren. A smooth, sideways scrolling arcade romp that sees you attempting to fly your ship to the landing strip at the end of the level, dodging land based objects, waves of alien ships and the arsenal they fire at you as you go.



n/a



Come with me on a journey through time, before YouTube reviews and playable demos and decades before the Internet of today. Travel further back, before movie tie-ins and sequels. Way back to when games were truly original, before the Big Bang of releases overwhelmed our game buying decisions. Back then you invested time in each game – partly because they took so long to load. In *4D Time-Gate*, as the wonderful backstory will attest, you have to travel in space and time to vanquish ‘The Enemy’ before they strike their first blow. The game could be played for hours at a time, exploring, shooting, ‘jumping’ – leaving the laser beams temporarily frozen in time. An overlooked classic.

48K

Stage 2. Player -1- Score 3150



n/a



**A**nother firm favourite in the arcades was *Scramble* – and such was the fashion of the time, publishers took inspiration from these games and produced their own interpretation for the home computers. Apart from its dubious name, *Penetrator* was by far the best *Scramble* clone on the ZX Spectrum and faithfully represented each of the cavernous areas of its arcade brethren allowing you to spew bombs onto the undulating ground below and fire torpedoes straight ahead at launching enemies. On clearing a cycle of the game you are rewarded with a fireworks display that, to this day, challenges those of New Years Eve celebrations in London. The aim of the game was all about beating your high score!

Game: Jetpac Publisher: Ultimate Play The Game Year: 1983

1UP  
020635

5X  
000000

HI  
2UP  
000000

16K



n/a



Ultimate Play the Game became the company to beat very early on in the life of the ZX Spectrum with stunning titles that other developers had to live up to – they became the benchmark with each new title released. *Jetpac* was their first title, released in 1983 for the lowly 16K Spectrum, where your protagonist space adventurer is thrust into intergalactic travel, building spaceships, killing aliens and trying to figure out the meaning of life. The game's objective is simple; build your spaceship, fill it with fuel then rocket on to the next level, all the while dodging an array of technicolor aliens. The mechanics of the game are sublime – using 'Jetpac Thrustpack' technology to bound across the screen.

48K



No, this wasn't based on the 1985 Arnie flick of the same name, although you'd be forgiven for tying the two together given the similarity of their premise. Indeed, this game is likely inspired more by *Rambo: First Blood*, which had a massive cultural impact in the early 80s. *Commando* was one of the first gaming experiences that delivered on Hollywood's brand of shoot-first-ask-questions-never, grenade toting, boots first, balls out, Commie killing, jungle trashing, shootin'-from-the-hip action spectaculars. That said, *Commando* was also closely related to the scrolling vertical shoot-'em-up genre seeing players making their way interminably up-screen, shooting anything and everything that crossed their paths.

Game: Bomb Jack Publisher: Elite Systems Year: 1986

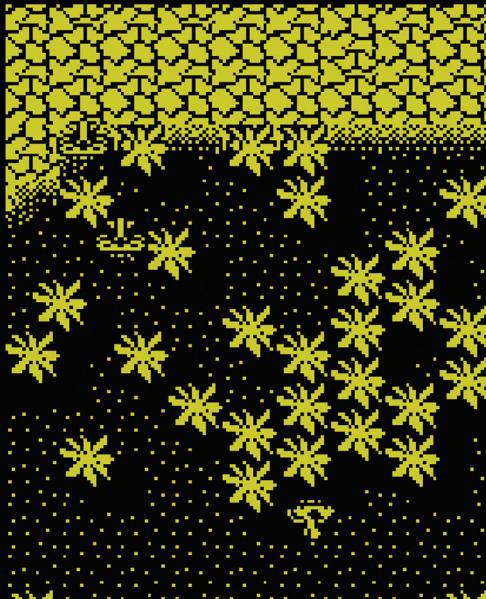


Even in 1984 when *Bomb Jack* was originally brought into the arcades, there weren't many game designers coming out with particularly original ideas – either because it was considered too risky to be overly original, or because they simply couldn't think of new ways to coax 10p from our pockets. But *Bomb Jack* can't easily be accused of copying anything that came before it, and it migrated to the home systems beautifully. Some dastardly deviant has been placing bombs at famous locations around the world, and only superhero *Bomb Jack* can come to the rescue. He's a quirky chap with unique powers that allow him to snaffle up irksome explosives ultimately invoking a detonation sequence that clears the level.

48K



85%

**TAITO**  
**PLAYER**  
**ONE**
**2000***J.Burnig*
**PLAYER**  
**TWO**

0

*D.Robinson*

Gaming was maturing very quickly toward the back end of the 80s as strategic and management games proved just how in-depth, profound and engaging digital experiences could be. But sometimes we just wanted to blow stuff up. At times like that we turned to the arcades, where it was all about instant gratification and bullet-riddled death. *Flying Shark* brought that glorious destruction home as you took to the skies in a heavily-armed biplane to bring down an entire army of advancing military machines. This was the epitome of vertically scrolling shooters, taking you on adventures over land and sea with nothing to worry about other than dodging bullets, missiles and bombs while delivering fast and brutal retribution to anything that moved.



If there's one thing any adaptation of *Gauntlet* demands, it's the sheer number of enemies in need of thwarting. Running around a dungeon populated by only a handful of ghosts, ghouls and skeletons just wouldn't cut the digital mustard, so you can appreciate the wall that Gremlin Graphics' back was up against in bringing it to the Speccy. *Gauntlet* made gaming history as one of the first ever powerhouse dungeon crawlers which thrilled gamers through its epic armies of enemies beating at the doors and walls to get to your character. Armed with various types of weapons and magic, depending on the role you chose, *Gauntlet* delivered on a host of different genres from hack 'n' slash to RPG and wove them seamlessly together.

48K

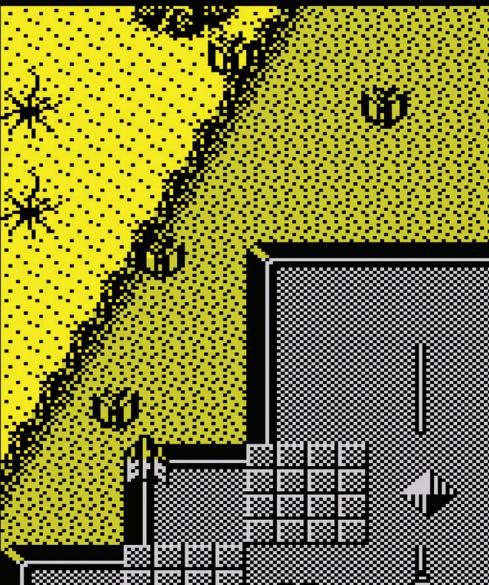
1' ST 004090 HI025000 2' ND 000000  
**MOONCRESTA**



90%



There were plenty of arcade conversions around before Incentive released this slightly-creaking shoot 'em-up in 1985, but other than Ocean's *Hunchback*, not many of them were officially licensed. When Incentive Software boss Ian Andrew was pondering on new angles to mark his software house out from the crowd in 1984, he hit upon the idea of trying to acquire the license for the popular *Moon Cresta* from Nichibitsu. Andrew revealed in 2011 that the UK branch of the arcade company were so surprised that anyone would want to licence the game that they had no idea on an actual value. When a figure of £1000 was suggested, the deal was swiftly done.



With Incentive having busied themselves creating the Freescape engine, the license to *Moon Cresta*'s sequel passed to Imagine who employed coder Jonathan Smith to replicate the arcade shooter for the Spectrum.

The arcade game itself represents a significant step up from its famous forebearer. Gone are the plain black backgrounds of space and in came a varied and colourful set of backdrops and new, elaborate enemies including – yes! – dinosaurs. This gave Smith a considerable problem, as the speed of the game was considered paramount, but it had to look at least half-decent. Thus he squeezed *Terra Cresta* into approximately one half of the Spectrum's display to give the frame rate a boost.

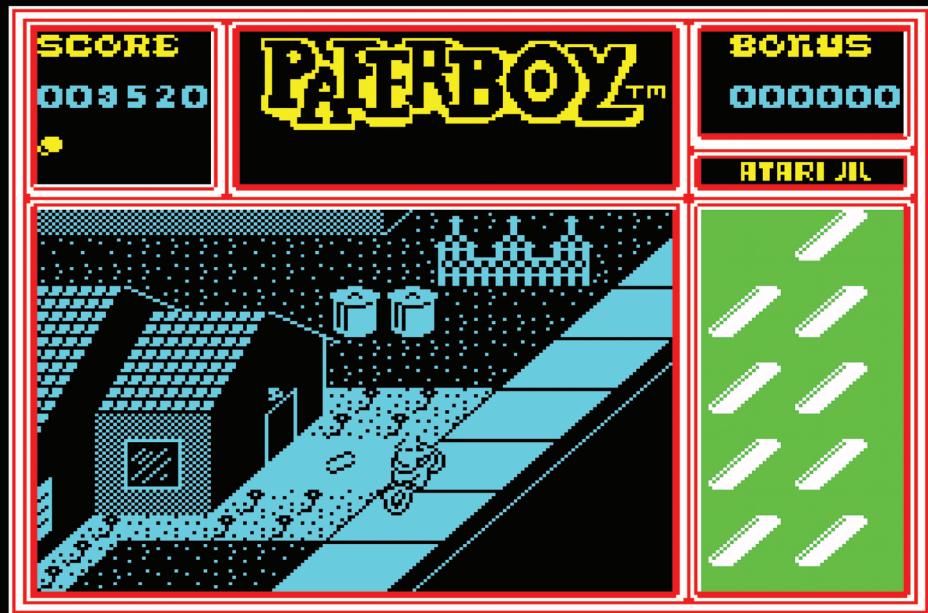
48K



63%



1942 was not as well received as Elite's other arcade conversions, but is still a decent game in its own right. Playing the 'Super Ace' (which is never made clear if it's the plane or pilot), the player must take on 32 levels of incessant enemy attacks, including fighter planes, bombers and jets. Shooting down a formation of five or ten red planes drops a bonus power up which varies from level to level – most useful is an extra life or the quad fire giving your plane two extra wingmen (slightly limited though thanks to the larger target it makes the player to enemy gunfire). Sound is noticeably poor, which in 1942's case is actually a blessing as it means you don't get the awful marching band-style whistling from the arcade original.



48K



88%

By 1986, Elite were well on their way to establishing themselves as a force to be reckoned with. *Commando*, *Ghosts 'n' Goblins*, *1942* – all were successful and decent arcade conversions thanks to its relationship with Japanese coin-op giant Capcom. *Paperboy* was another arcade game, but this time from Atari, and it was famous for not only having a set of handlebars as a controller, but also for featuring regularly on the 80s gaming quiz show, First Class. The objective of the game is to ride your trusty bike diagonally across several suburban streets, slinging newspapers in the vague direction of subscribers while breaking the windows of non-customers. Many pitfalls and traps await this brave paperboy.

48K

000220

LIZZY

RALPH



69%



A year or so after its original release in the arcades, Atari's popular smash 'em-up finally came punching, kicking and generally demolishing its way onto Sir Clive's finest. Although potentially making for some interesting hand gymnastics on the Spectrum's diminutive keyboard, the game was nevertheless designed to be playable by one to three players. Sinclair or Kempston joystick options were also available. Each player chooses to control either George, Lizzie or Ralph; people who have been mutated into gigantic monsters with the ability to bring down buildings with their bare fists, claws or paws. Bullet spitting helicopters, tanks, snipers and falls from crumbling buildings all conspire to reduce your health meter.



This arcade conversion had a troubled gestation. Originally previewed in the Spectrum magazines at the end of 1986, Elite finally managed to release the game 15 months later when the anticipation had greatly cooled off. Essentially a two-player version of *Commando*, the players took control of two soldiers, dropped behind enemy lines and charged with rescuing an American general captured by a band of naughty South American revolutionaries. In addition to a machine gun (with infinite bullets), the players can also pick up grenades and even hop into enemy tanks – provided they have fuel to get them going. *Ikari Warriors* is a worthy addition to Spectrum run ‘n’ gunners.

48K



81%



**S**kate or die! Based on the Atari arcade machine, this conversion by US Gold is unsurprisingly different graphically, but retains much of the original's playability. The location is the aptly-named Skate City, and your mission is to compete in several competitions, but first you must earn the cash to enter them by performing tricks on your skateboard. With its origins in the arcades, it's inevitable there's some sort of time limit; fail to gain entry into one of the competition parks quickly enough and the player is hounded by a swarm of killer bees who have obviously mistaken the skateboarder for a blooming flower bed. In addition, errant bikers seek to dislodge our hero and waste even more precious seconds. An addictive jaunt in the park.

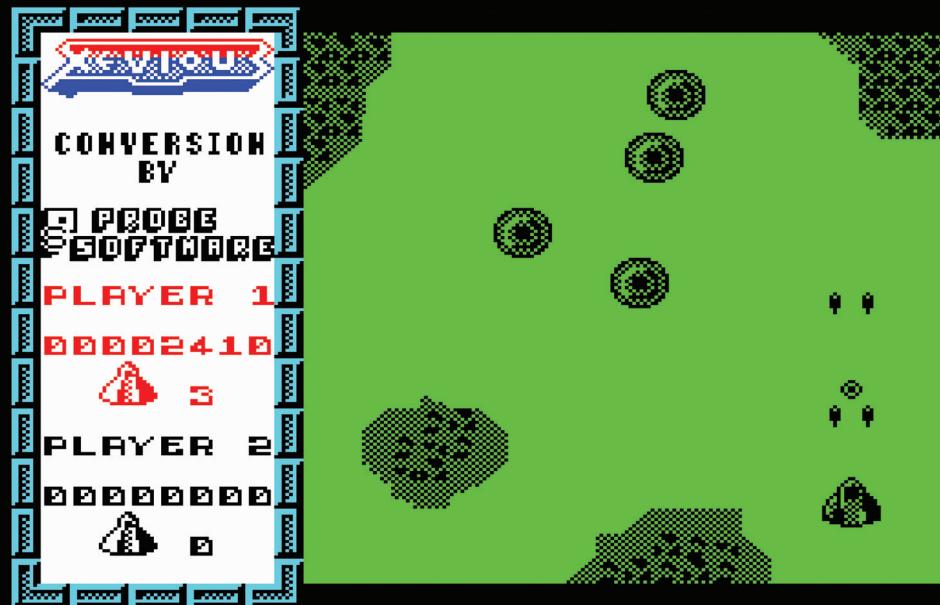


Who in their right mind wanted a *Breakout* clone? After all, the creaky old Horizons tape that came with early Spectrums contained a perfectly decent example called *Thro' the Wall*. But then *Arkanoid* was always more than a mere *Breakout* clone, featuring power-up capsules that boost the capabilities of your bat and allow you to advance through numerous brick-filled rounds, culminating in a boss battle against the temperamental space alien Doh. Taito's coin-op runs on standard Z80 hardware so the Spectrum version is unsurprisingly close to the original and includes all of its features (bar the 'spinner' rotary control system obviously, although the keyboard proves to be an adequate substitute).

48K



64%



Released some five whole years after the influential arcade original was released in Japan, this Spectrum conversion of *Xevious* was undeniably slow out of the blocks. Unfortunately the fear of colour clash and the ensuing penchant for monochromatic games had taken hold by 1987 and not only was it looking a bit dated but it was also looking a bit too erm... well, green. It plays pretty much the same as the original thankfully with smooth scrolling of the play area and some nicely animated sprites gracing the screen. Two players can take turns in dealing death to the poor Xevious who have re-inhabited Earth after being away since the last ice-age (has no-one heard of sharing?) The game unfortunately does get tiresome pretty quickly.

**SCORE 0007500****LIVES 07****48K**

65%



Arcade games always proved a challenge for developers to convert to the Spectrum and *Gryzor* is no exception thanks to its fast, intense gameplay and multiple viewpoints. The Spectrum conversion opted for monochrome graphics; the team used a colourful display with the various sprites merging in with the colour of the background. It results in a game that looks good in screenshots, but is a little tricky to play. The first level is akin to *Green Beret* as your soldier makes his way across a deceptively bucolic landscape to an alien base. Blast off the door and it's into a series of tunnels in a 3D perspective before climbing up a gorge to a final battle with the boss alien.



There was never any pretence that *Planetoids* was anything other than a direct *Asteroids* clone. Not even the title made much of an effort to camouflage the fact. But this was the early days of home gaming, and in 1982, if a system – whether computer or console – didn't have a version of *Asteroids*, its sales were going to be unfairly affected. The brain trust at Sinclair Research understood this dilemma intimately, and so the computer manufacturer itself decided to publish Psion Software's take on the asteroid-blasting arcade smash. And for good reason; this was an austere, yet faithful *Asteroids* clone. The ship lacked the inertia that made the original feel so sci-fi, but physics aside it delivered on the rock-splitting action dutifully.



**B**ack when the Cold War was something the older boys used to talk about to make us young kids cry, Percy Thrower used to get his fingers green in the Blue Peter garden. Young teenage boys around the UK loaded up *Pssst* on their Spectrums in an attempt to apply the tricks learnt from their gardening guru. A simple premise (they always are), the challenge is to keep the bugs away from the budding plant on screen for long enough, allowing it to blossom into a striking sunflower. The action gets hectic pretty soon as all manner of flying insects and creepy crawlies are looking for a midday snack and home in on the green, lush shoots sprouting from the soil as you look to protect it until full bloom. Percy Thrower eat your heart out!

48K

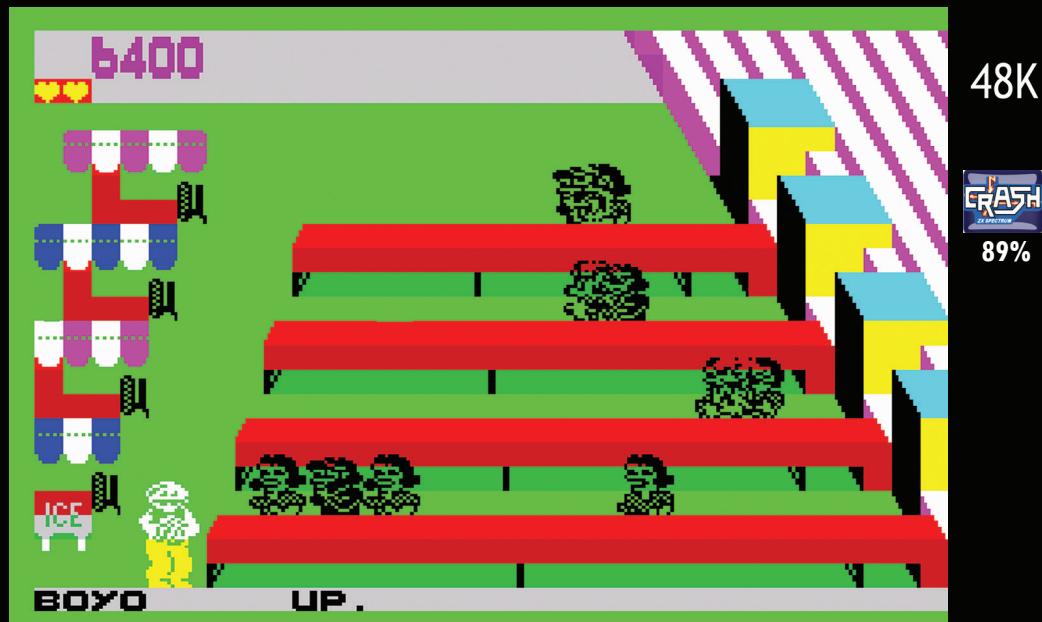
BONUS 02950

SCORE 01674



Mario started on his quest to stardom in the arcades some time ago by jumping over barrels and climbing ladders to rescue the damsel in distress from the killer gorilla. The Spectrum conversion of *Donkey Kong* is faithful to the original and is an early Ocean title written by Paul Owens, who went on to write *Daley Thompson's Decathlon*. By Paul's own admission, he was not too good with graphics so Kong himself looks rather like a malnourished Neanderthal man in need of a good feed whilst Mario's alter ego runs with the enigmatic style of an antelope being chased by a lion. The gameplay is addictive but unforgiving as you traverse through four different stages looking to save your loved one and destroy Kong.

Game: Tapper Publisher: US Gold Year: 1985



With a rather grown up theme where the sole aim of the game is to keep the drinking pundits happy by sliding pints of beer down the numerous bar tops and then collecting the returning glasses – *Tapper* proved to be great fun and great practice for that time when you got a bar job to pay your fees in college. The action becomes frantic as the race is on to pull the pints in time and then collect the glasses from other bars – if a glass is broken or a punter gets to the end of the bar looking for his drink then it's a life lost. Between bar levels there's a mini game where cans are shaken then shuffled – pick the unshaken one to avoid a messy explosion – this is a game that always demands another go.

SCORE: 224500 HIGH: 333000  
**48K**  STAGES: 001



88%



**G**reen Beret is one of those Spectrum arcade conversions that is still today spoken of in hushed tones of excited praise. It's also coded by Jonathan Smith who sadly passed away in 2012. The game's premise is simple: proceed from left to right as the soldier of the title, stabbing enemies with your knife, or taking out several at once with the flame thrower or missile launcher. There are four stages, with your destination being the prison camp and captured comrades; but first you must negotiate the missile base, harbour and bridge, all of which contain a mass of enemies varying from high-kicking experts (a jump is needed to eliminate them), armed soldiers and regular grunts. The key to *Green Beret* is its playability.

Game: Starstrike II Publisher: Realtime Games Year: 1986



While Realtime's *3D Starstrike* was an impressive game that more than echoed the famous *Star Wars* coin-op, it was with this sequel two years later that the developer really broke the mould. Playing an attacking federation force, launching a pre-emptive strike against the aliens from the first game, *Starstrike II* presents 22 planets of varying resilience that have to be visited, destroying the control system of each in turn. What sets this sequel apart are the stunning 3D vector graphics – now complete with shading, much to the astonishment of gamers and reviewers at the time. *Starstrike II* is a great space shooter, and an amazing achievement squeezed into just 48K.

**Game:** Space Harrier **Publisher:** Elite Systems **Year:** 1986

48K



77%



For a brief, wonderful summer, the seafronts of Britain thundered with sounds of *Space Harrier* arcade machines. The hero's deep and lamentable death knell, the thumping soundtrack, the onslaught of futuristic weapons fire and the coin-op's irresistible call to action of "Get ready!" were a symphony of digital excess that delighted our game-addled brains. All of which made this a significant home conversion. The slightest failure in its adaptation would kill it dead. Fortunately Elite Systems triumphed, and the Spectrum was awarded one of the fastest and most pixel perfect conversions ever seen. The rolling, winding chequered floor was fully intact, with the arcade game being condensed into just 48K.

48K



93%



Even the most ardent of Sylvester Stallone fans would surely admit that the movie *Cobra* was hardly the Italian Stallion's finest effort. Stallone grunts and groans through a ridiculous and vague plot before coming face to face with the evil night slasher. On seeing the script, Ocean Software perhaps saw that despite being weak cinematically, it could actually make a decent computer game. Coding duties were handled by Jonathan Smith. Playing over three different scrolling levels, *Cobra* faces an array of enemies with initially just a lethal head-butt to dispatch them with. Rocket launcher toting women and prams (!) gang up on our hero; hamburgers give *Cobra* the health to continue. Bizarre but great.



Few software houses in the Eighties enjoyed the success and reputation of Hewson. For a time, every game they released on the Spectrum struck gold, from *Exolon* to this mighty and beautiful scrolling shoot-'em-up, implausibly named *Zynaps*. Coded by Dominic Robinson and Steve Crow, *Zynaps* was at heart a *Nemesis* clone and a signal that Konami really should have done a lot better with its official adaptation of the famous arcade game. Eschewing any pretension of plot (something most were grateful for), *Zynaps* gives the player control of an odd-looking spacecraft that has to negotiate through 16 levels of enemies, both flying and ground-based. *Zynaps* is a colourful, playable and addictive shoot-'em-up.

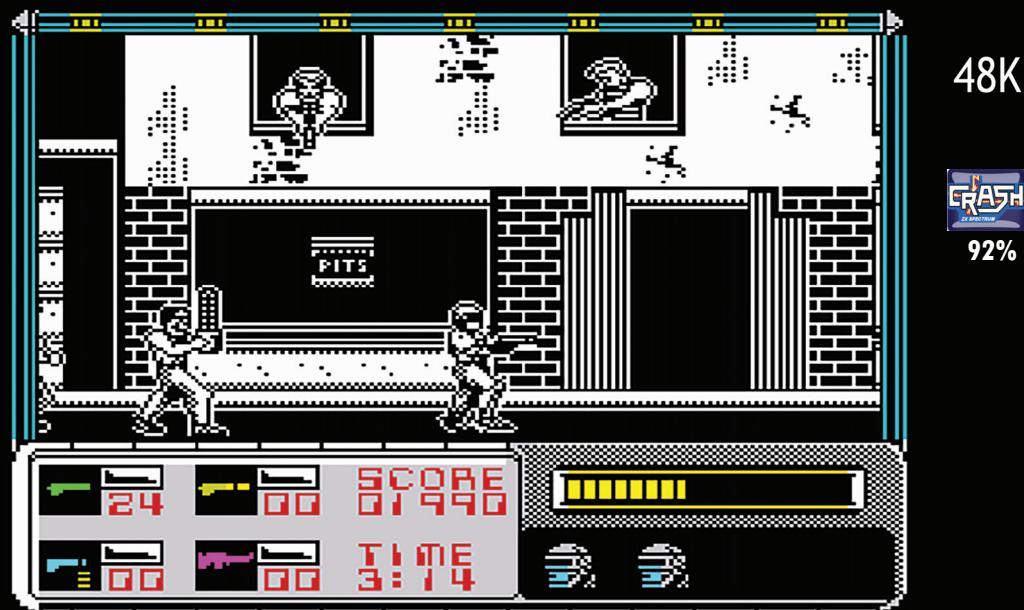


Only in 1980s Japan could a game like *Pang* have been conceived. Everything about it is quintessentially Japanese, from its manga-esque cut scenes to the crazy, effervescent characters and crackpot concept. Players are armed with an unusual type of harpoon, which shoots from the ground wherever the safari-clad main character is stood, and stops when it skewers the ceiling. It drags a rope along with it, and only disappears when one of the huge, bouncing bubbles makes contact, and pops. The bubble is then split into smaller bubbles that only bounce half as high, but move more quickly. Still with me? If *Pang* had to be compared to any other game, it'd probably have to be *Asteroids*.



Two player games weren't exactly common on the Spectrum, but neither could they be easily classed as rare. Co-operative two player games, on the other hand, were – and *Bubble Bobble* was one of the finest examples as to why playing together was better than playing against each other. Cute and crazy, as only the Japanese know how, the game features Bub and Bob; two bubble blowing dragons who jump around single-screen levels, capturing a wild variety of weird creatures inside their mouth-blown bubbles. Players had to be quick to pop these bubbles before the creatures escaped, and clear the level within a tight time limit, collecting a host of power-ups and special items as they appeared on the screen.

Game: RoboCop Publisher: Ocean Software Year: 1988



O h my god! The computer just spoke! That was the mind-stopping reaction we all had as, upon loading, the Spectrum's official *RoboCop* game rewarded us with a spoken sample of Murphy's three prime directives. Those short commandments were immediately burned into our gaming consciousness. Ocean's home conversion of Data East's arcade machine was more than just clever sampled speech, however. The cybernetic shoot-'em-up was a stunning effort boasting large detailed visuals that scrolled like they were made of warm butter, while the action delivered on every hyper-violent promise of its Hollywood inspiration. A rare circumstance where the converted game actually improved on its arcade cousin.

**Game:** Target: Renegade **Publisher:** Imagine Software **Year:** 1988



When the long-awaited home conversion of *Double Dragon* completely dropped the ball, Ocean deftly picked it up with its in-house sequel to *Double Dragon*'s spiritual predecessor, *Renegade*. The studio was fortunate in that its original *Renegade* license included an option for sequels, which Taito never delivered (not directly, at least). So Ocean made it anyway in the shape of *Target: Renegade*, and put a superbly British spin on the co-operative scrolling beat-'em-up that took players on a two-man rampage through multi-storey car parks, snooker clubs and impoverished ghettos. *Target: Renegade* was a crowning moment in Spectrum gaming history as it proved that Clive's 8-bit warrior was the equal of the arcades.

Game: R-Type Publisher: Electric Dreams Year: 1988



If we ever needed proof that the Speccy was the equal of any other games platform (and we don't) you can find it right here in the home conversion of Irem's spectacular scrolling sci-fi shooter, *R-Type*. You could almost believe that Electric Dreams which handled the conversion found some magical way to break the Spectrum's graphical rules. *R-Type* was the brightest and most colourful game ever to grace the 8-bit, and its gameplay didn't suffer in the slightest due to its luscious, bio-mechanical presentation. To be fair, a major aspect of *R-Type*'s gameplay is that it's not a fast-moving fight. That doesn't mean it's any less engaging or action-packed, more a side-scrolling shooter by which all others are measured, especially on the Spectrum.





## ZX Spectrum +

The ZX Spectrum + tried to address the huge bug-bear of the original 48K model, the keyboard. One could argue that the + keyboard should have been a lot better than it was – reports soon came in after launch that keys were falling out of the machine if held upside down. One other bonus that made the upgrade somewhat worthwhile was a reset button.



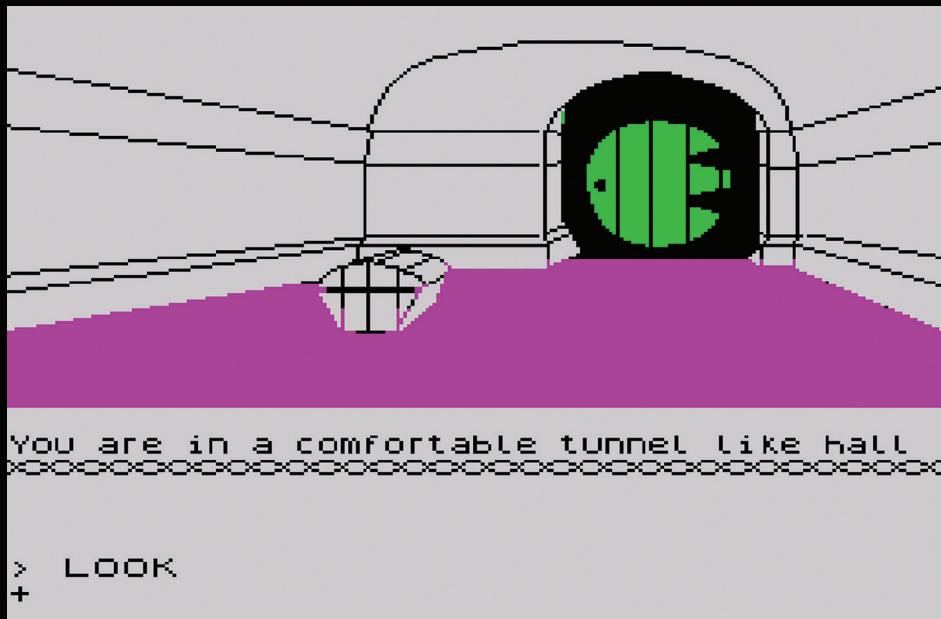


**adventure**

48K



n/a



When playing *The Hobbit* a vivid imagination is helpful. The game sports simple graphics that depict the location you find yourself occupying – it does help somewhat to mentally add colour to the scene just as you would if you were reading the Tolkien book itself. To help the player fill in the gaps, the game actually came with the book on release. When playing the game, instructions could be entered similar to natural speech making *The Hobbit* a landmark title in the text adventure space. As the characters made their way independently across Middle Earth, you never quite knew who you were going to bump into on the next input of 'N', 'S', 'W' or 'E'.

48K



CRASH  
EXPRESS

64%

You are in a strange red room  
near a Pot Plant and a pretty  
little window

exits lead: - north

You see:-  
a pair of dungarees

>

**U**rban Upstart begins with the famous phrase, 'Scarthorpe is the sort of town where even the dogs carry flick knives', hinting at a violent, yet satiric look at municipal life. Pete Cooke, fed up with the endless stream of fantasy-set adventure games, had decided it would be novel to create a modern setting reflecting the woes and ills of a Thatcherite suburban nightmare. Scarthorpe was a combination of many of the examples of urban misery that he had either experienced or seen on television. Playing an unnamed character, your task was merely to escape Scarthorpe. Sounds easy? Not when there's only one road in, and it's a one-way street! Like many adventures it isn't easy – regular trips to the police station are guaranteed!

48K



8

You are in an entrance hallway. Above there is the stairway. To the south there is the front door.



```
< Mon 08:05am >
> D.
YOU CANNOT GO DOWN.
> W:
> D:
> +
```

The *Sherlock Holmes* text adventure was over 18 months in development, and the team even had a Holmes expert on staff to help with accuracy, vernacular and plot authenticity. The result was one of the most complete Sherlock Holmes games ever made, at the risk of alienating anyone new to text adventures. Watson convinces you, as the famous detective, to investigate a double murder in the town of Leatherhead, so off you go with Inspector Lestrade in tow. There is good reason for including these ancillary characters, as the intelligent game engine allows you to converse with them and encourage them to perform actions for you giving them a degree of autonomy within the story.



Bimbo stood in his comfortable tunnel like hall. To the east was the round green door and a small window was set high into the wall.

To the south, was the round green toilet.

**Bimbo also noticed-**  
**a large, wooden chest**

If there was one thing that both Spectrum users and developers loved, it was making fun of... well, everyone and everything that wasn't them, or a Spectrum. Parodies were rife, and unforgiving, including the hilariously scathing text adventure *Bored of the Rings*, which was quickly followed by *The Boggit: Bored Too*. This graphically supported text adventure took a knife to Tolkien's *The Hobbit* by requiring players to help Bimbo Faggins and Grandalf to shore up cash, solve puzzles and eventually make their way onto a TV quiz show. Despite lampooning a literary cultural treasure that also happened to be an immensely popular text adventure at the time, *The Boggit* was incredibly well written, drawing upon pop culture of the day.

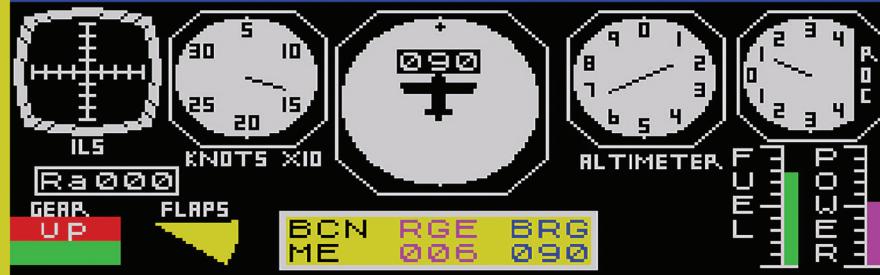


# **space/simulation**

48K



n/a

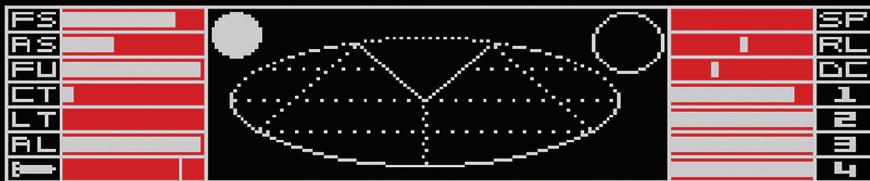


**A**s a teenager, the art of flying a plane was beyond my comprehension, involving physics that I had yet to learn. Psion's *Flight Simulation* allowed me to give flying a go and by doing so ensured, that after crashing umpteen times whilst coming into land and taking off, it was not a career I would want to pursue after A levels. Written in BASIC the game chugs along at a woeful frame rate and can take some time to represent your intended manoeuvre on the screen. The scenery is non-existent with a few graphical representations of lakes to break up the monotony of blue. With joystick in hand and cockpit in front of you, the game did though give budding enthusiasts the opportunity to 'simulate' flying and landing a light aircraft.



The Spectrum was under fire from 16-bits by 1990. People were looking toward massively detailed and in-depth games rather than more shooters and platformers. Games like *Sim City*; world builders that could never be condensed to fit on a cassette tape. Except the team at Probe Software accomplished this incredible task, and did it so well, it appeared that *Sim City* had been created with the Spectrum gamer in mind all along. *Sim City* was delivered intact, allowing you to become governor of your own sprawling 8-bit metropolis while proving that the brilliance of the game was in its design and not its flashy visuals. It was efforts like this that managed to keep the 8-bit computers alive for another few wonderful years.

48K



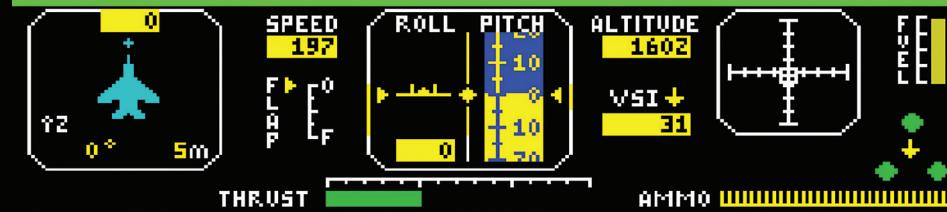
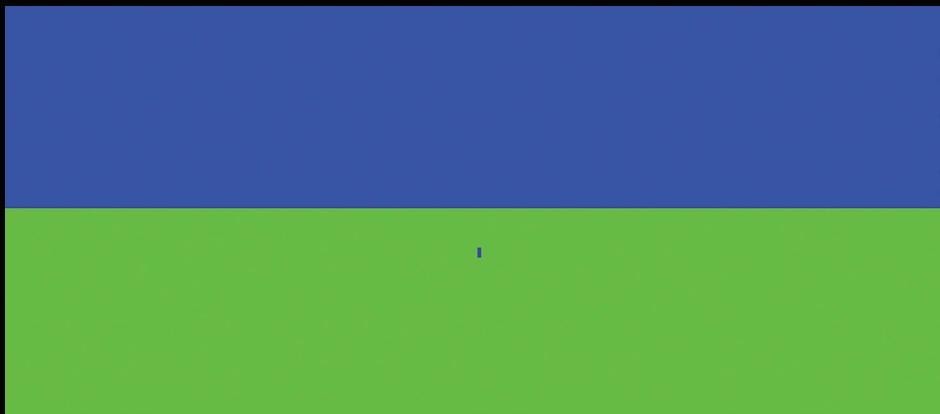
It has to be a sign of *Elite's* innovation that even today, it beggars belief that a universe of this size was miraculously packed into 48KB. It's a feat of engineering that's rarely, if ever, been bested in the gaming world. You set out into the unreachable blackness of outer space in your trusty Cobra Mk III, with your eyes on the goal of becoming the most feared and respected mercenary in the galaxy. *Elite* revealed itself to harbour far greater depth than merely killing other space farers. A complex trading system allowed you to make necessary upgrades to your ship, where local economies affected the price of different goods, weapons, parts and supplies. *Elite* is still remembered as the thinking man's game!

**Game:** Fighter Pilot **Publisher:** Digital Integration **Year:** 1983

48K



86%

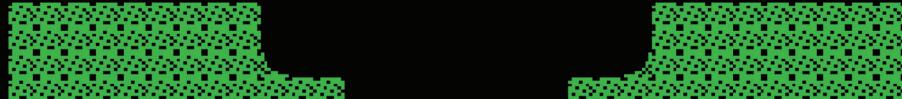
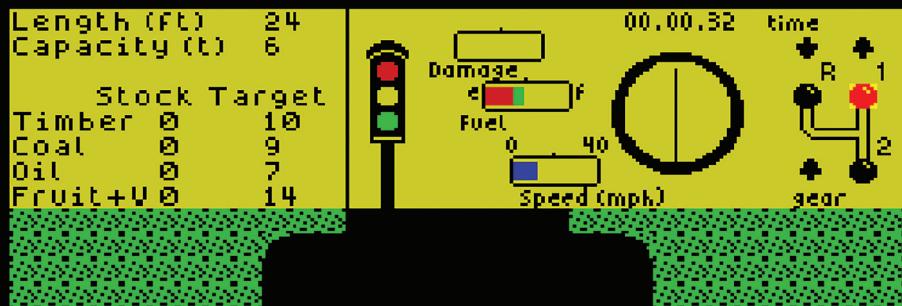


O riginating on the ZX81, *Fighter Pilot* was coded by David Marshall, co-founder of Digital Integration along with Rod Swift. Both Marshall and Swift were ex-RAF employees who saw the potential to create accurate and entertaining simulations on home computers. Based upon the popular USAF F15 Eagle jet fighter, the game offers thousands of relative square miles of territory to explore and a complex set of controls to master. Of course, there is plenty of shooting too, but *Fighter Pilot* is also a remarkably in-depth simulation for 1983. The game features several options from the essential landing practice to thrilling air-to-air combat. The game was in the software charts for many months after its initial release.

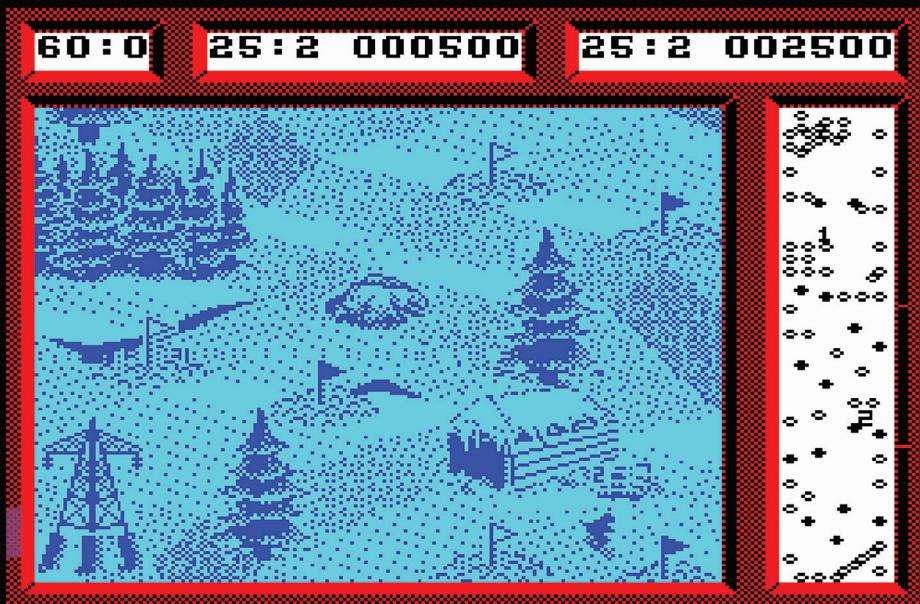
48K



73%



This title was the first major arcade game from Pete Cooke, and the first of his work published by London software house, CRL. The coder got the idea for the game from a friend who had recently failed his HGV exam. Thinking the physics and complexities of reversing an articulated truck would make for an interesting game (he was a maths teacher after all), Cooke developed a wire-frame truck and an environment for it to drive in before adding the predictable deliver-the-goods type story to his engine. CRL's owner, Clem Chambers, was suitably impressed, calling the game's graphics 'impressively cool' and instantly signing it up. Mastering the truck was a task in itself, and not helped by a mission time limit.

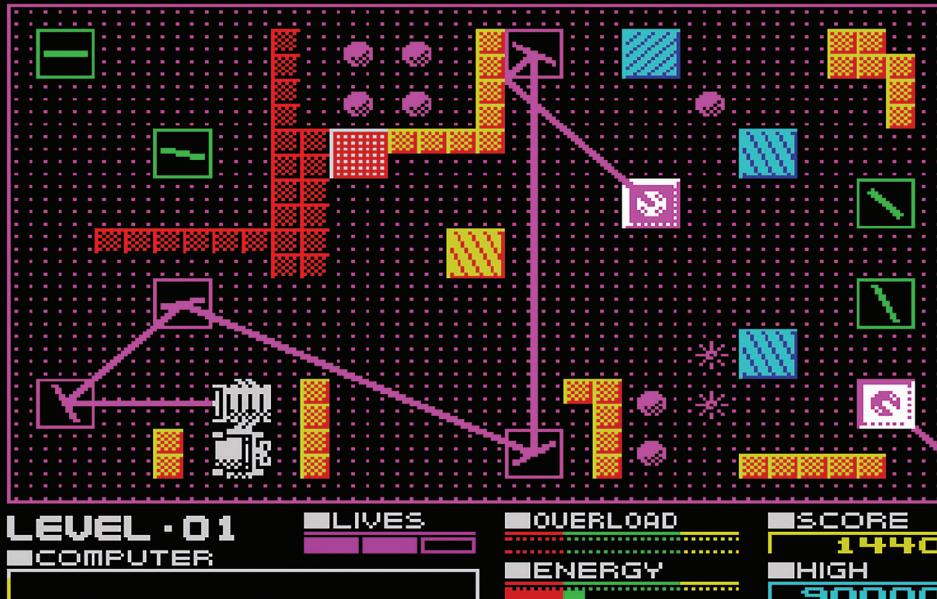


One cannot help but hum the tune to *Ski Sunday* when playing *Professional Ski Simulator* – it's that kind of game. Philip and Andrew Oliver took a break from their famous *Dizzy* brand to bring the European ski slopes into the bedroom. The controls are simple with the left and right movements on the joystick rotating the player and the fire button propelling the skier forwards with his sticks. If this game sounds a little like the skiing section in *Horace Goes Skiing*, that's because it is. The Olivers though have gone the extra mile and created a graphically rich ski slope with obstacles to avoid and flags to ski around – you can even race your mate down the hill to the finishing line in two-player mode.

48K



77%

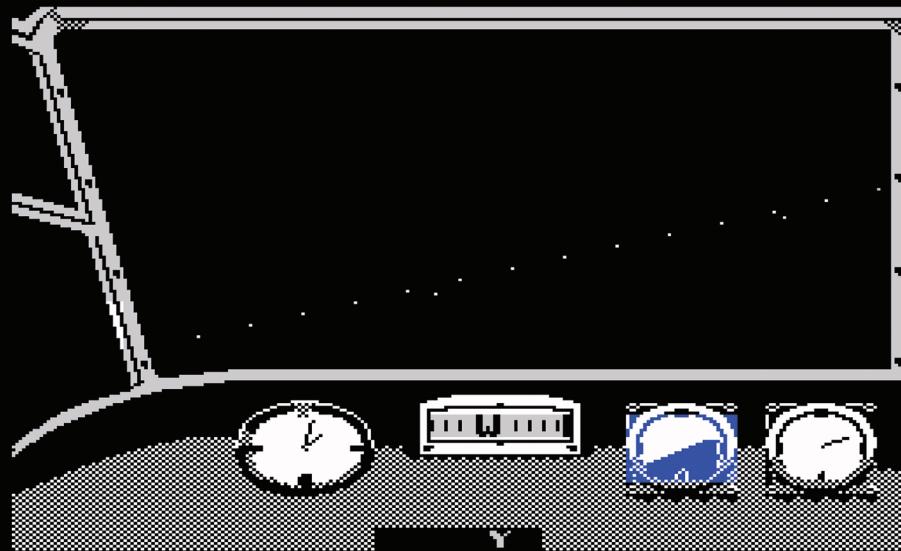


This game by Vortex is fiendishly clever and difficult in equal amounts despite the game's simple premise; move a large cursor around a screen attempting to align mirrors in order to get a laser beam to the receiver. Things sound trickier when you realise the depletion of your already ever-decreasing energy bar is hastened every time your laser beam wanders onto a spike (making your laser overload) and your path is hindered by blocks which alter the angle of your beam. Automatically rotating mirrors and 'phantoms' which appear and start sabotaging all you have achieved also add to the frustration. Frustration that can be lessened by use of the very welcome practice mode before undertaking the game itself.

48K

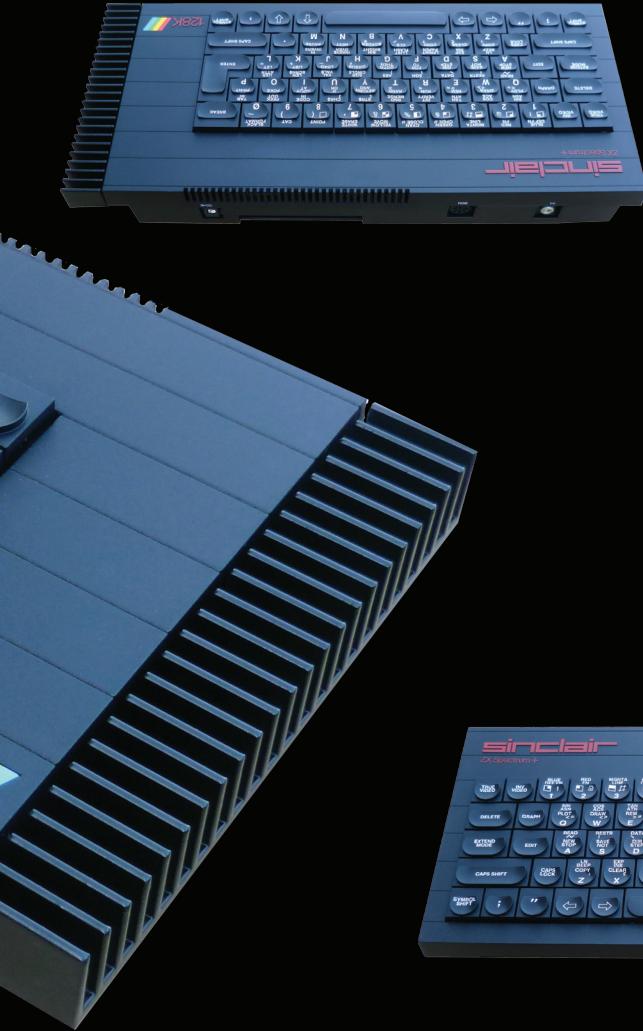


75%



One of US Gold's regular developers, Platinum Productions (*Zaxxon*, *Tapper*) was entrusted with the Spectrum interpretation of this famous World War II mission, Operation Chastise. Their main challenge was to make an exciting game, with the obvious culmination being the bombing of the dams. The player takes complete control of a Lancaster bomber en route to Germany. There are eight screens that represent a certain facet of the bomber, from pilot and engineer to bombardier and rear gunner. Gunners must defend the plane from fighters and barrage balloons; engineers monitor the engines and can extinguish fires, the navigator sets the course and the pilot ensures they keep to it. Sparse graphics and a lack of action spoils the experience.





## ZX Spectrum 128K

The ZX Spectrum 128K was the last Spectrum released by Sinclair and sported 128K of memory and a 3-channel AY sound chip. The appearance of the machine was the same as the + with the exception of a large heatsink on the right end of the case. At the back are a few new ports - MIDI port, RS-232 serial port and an RGB monitor port. The 128K had no internal speaker like its predecessors with sound coming out of the TV instead.





# **STRATEGY/PUZZLE**

48K

MIDDLE  
DECK

n/a



CommandCenter Damage 00% TOOH: 74.78  
 Items Present Grille in place  
 Lambert is OK and Stable  
 Also here Ripley, Parker

Lambert  
 move to:  
 Corridor#1  
  
 use:  
 Get Item  
 Special  
 RmveGrille  
 Scuttle  
 Nostromo  
 QUIT

The difficulty of finding a decent movie-to-game adaptation is nothing new, though it certainly still plagues the games industry. Even in 1984 the games media found itself surprised when a faithful and enjoyable tie-in game appeared, and *Alien* was one of the first to accomplish this apparently difficult medium migration. Although it appeared some years after the classic sci-fi/horror flick, all the tension and suspense of *Alien* was captured beautifully, as you guide the terrified crew of the Nostromo around its dark and sinister corridors in an attempt to hunt down the vicious, eponymous xenomorph. It even requires you to save Jones the cat before escaping in the shuttle. How's that for staying true to the original story?

**Game:** Highway Encounter **Publisher:** Vortex Software **Year:** 1985



48K



95%



Many a true Dr. Who fan were thrilled to play *Highway Encounter* as they took control of what looked very much like a Dalek – a Dalek whose sole purpose was to literally ‘sweep’ the road ahead. Parked at the end of the dual carriageway strip is the mothership of a bunch of aliens that have invaded Earth. Your quest is to lead a team of ‘Vorton’ buddies as they push along Pandora’s box along mile after mile of tarmaced road until it’s introduced to the craft. Along the way you have to zip around shooting baddies and try to keep a nice clear path for your not so intelligent space-bin friends to traverse. Thirty zones later and the little box of doom trundles along to the mothership and unleashes the laser from hell on its hull.

48K



93%

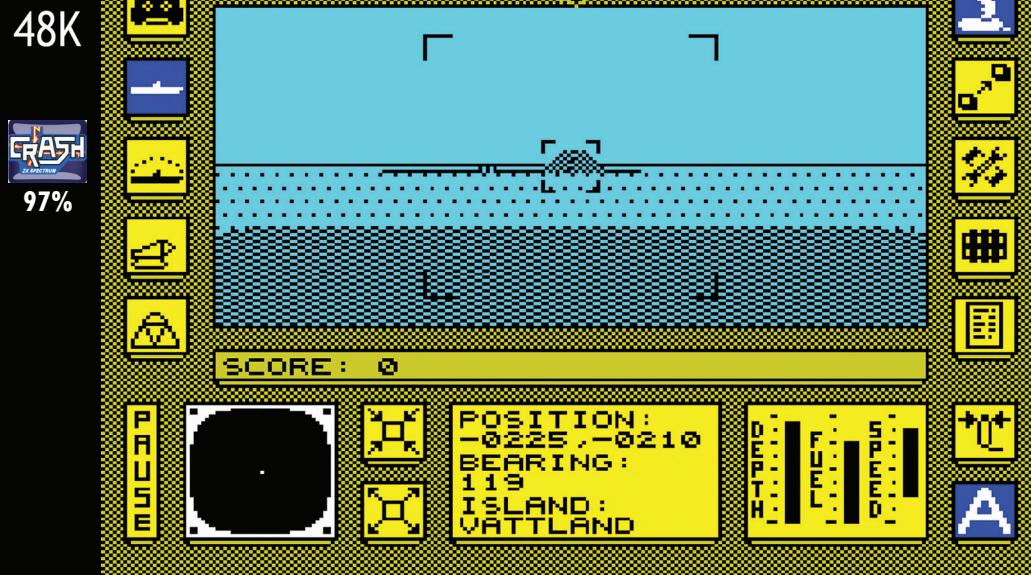


Sometimes overlooked, stuck as it is between the simple ingenious purity of *Chaos* and the epic space adventure of *Laser Squad*, 1986 turn-based game *Rebelstar* is a fascinating snapshot of a genre in transition. As the Rebelstar Raiders, the aim of this £1.99 gem was to break into a secure bunker and shut down the malfunctioning AI that had stolen your secret plans. As plots go, it's hardly original, but where mechanics are concerned *Rebelstar* represented a huge leap forwards for strategy gaming. *Rebelstar*'s world was far more interactive than anything previously seen, allowing debris to block doors and passages, objects to be picked up and dropped and unscripted map changes to have serious consequences.

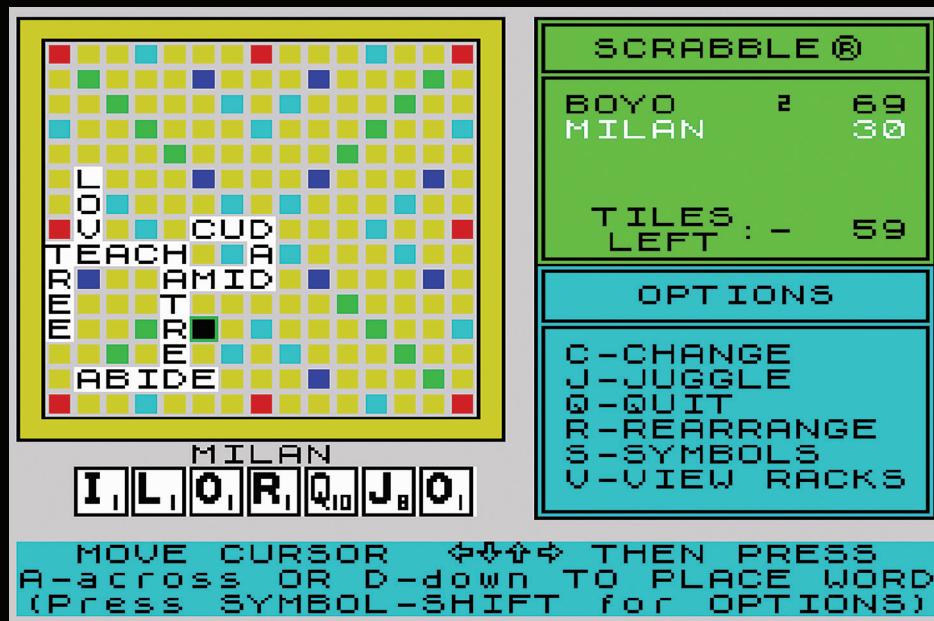


Considered by many to be one of the earliest examples of virtual reality gaming, *The Sentinel* took home computers to new realms through its solid-filled 3D graphics, huge number of levels and very unique gameplay. The visuals were simply stunning, but incredibly taxing for computers of the day. To help the noble Speccy cope with the solid polygons of *The Sentinel*, the gameplay essentially fixes you in place. So you can look around the stunningly realistic environments (?!), but the telepathing robot you're in control of can't explore them. Not directly, anyway. The aim is to make your way from the lowest regions of the 3D world to the highest peak where *The Sentinel* stands. Absorb it, and the world is yours.

48K



**A**lthough we now lament the days when the arcades went 3D and coin-op gaming ate itself, in 1988 sat in front of a Spectrum and a portable TV in our bedroom, the elusive third dimension was still a far-off dream. And then *Carrier Command* came along, and we were plunged into new depths of astonishing polygonal realism. *Carrier Command*, though somewhat forgotten by gaming scholars, was remarkable for a number of reasons. Yes, it featured hyper real (well, for the day) 3D vector graphics, but it also boasted a great sci-fi storyline. A team of scientists had created remote controlled aircraft carriers, and it was up to you to pilot them around an archipelago and colonise it. Easy?



48K



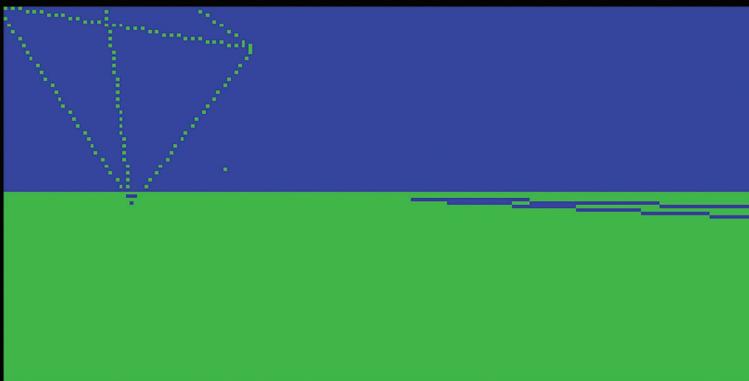
n/a

**B**oasting 11,000 words in its vocabulary and a clean, functional user interface, Psion's officially licensed *Scrabble* is an excellent adaptation of the famous board game and a valuable piece of software in the battle by kids to persuade parents that the Spectrum is for educational purposes after all. The game was released in 1983, but most will remember it as part of a bundle pack with new Spectrums that included those other two ubiquitous games, *Survival* and *Make-A-Chip*. The key part of *Scrabble* is the ability to play against the Spectrum itself. Up to four players can take part and any combination of human and computer players can be used. The dictionary itself is fairly exhaustive.

48K



96%



**D**avid Aubrey-Jones was behind the Speedlock protection system that aimed to restrict hackers and pirates. Yet after he helped lock down the system he coded this 3D masterpiece that expanded the limits of what players thought possible on the Spectrum. This was one of the first games to present a 'real' world for you to explore. It really felt like a vast city had been shoehorned into the Spectrum, with buildings and bridges and tunnels. Of course it was a conversion job – the game was originally developed by Paul Woakes for the Atari 8-bit. This was no straight port however, as Aubrey-Jones spent a year converting the game and making sure it tapped the speed potential of the Z80.

48K



78%

Mr Gibson would go on to have a considerable career in videogames, but it is with a triumvirate of titles for Liverpool's Imagine Software where he began. First came *Molar Maul* and *Zzoom* before he answered the calls from Imagine's management for a fast-paced strategy title with *Stonkers*. Controlling one of two armies in an unnamed war, your objective is to eliminate the enemy units and base while keeping your own army well-supplied and active. Controlling the various units is relatively easy and for a strategy game *Stonkers* does not require the hours of concentration that many of its slower-paced peers demanded. The game is still playable and very addictive, especially when played against a fellow human.

48K

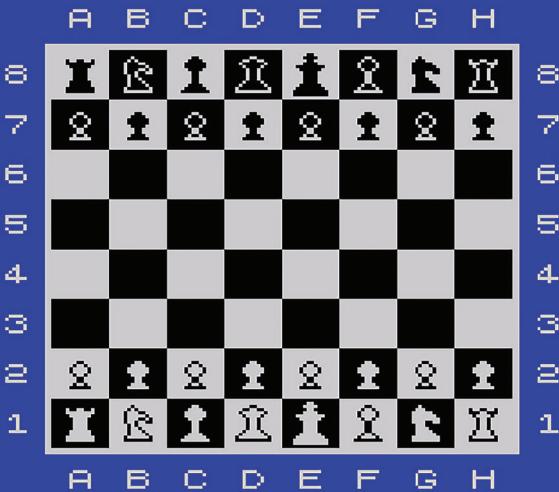


n/a

YOU

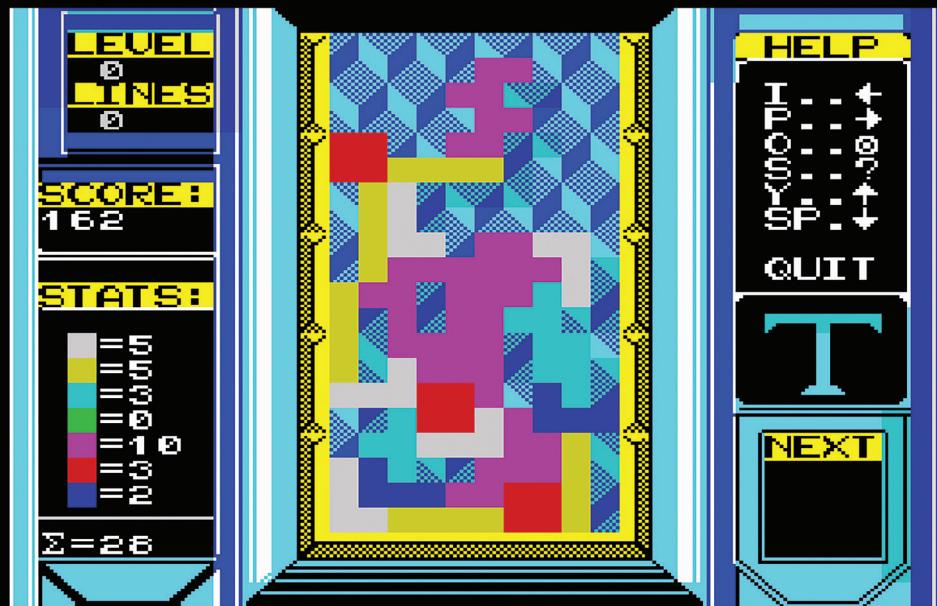
Me

Masterchess



Play or set up? P or S.

This pioneering Spectrum release by Psion is also one of the most elegant Chess versions available for the machine. Subsequently also released on ROM cartridge, its features include 10 difficulty levels – although at anything above level four the pace of play slows down considerably as the Speccy ponders its next move. Also on show in this feature-laden offering are custom board set up, moves list, hints, a choice of colour or black and white modes and the use of all legal chess moves such as castling and en passant. A game for all abilities; lower difficulty levels will challenge the novice whilst higher level players will still find the humble Spectrum a worthy opponent and quite hard to conquer.



48K



77%

Tetris was made for the Spectrum. Yeah, yeah, it's been made for every computer and console ever released, but its design suits the Speccy's limited, blocky colour options beautifully. For a few wonderful hours, back in the day, you could believe that the Spectrum was as colourful as that new Amiga thing that just came out. Naturally there are a lot of versions. And we mean a lot. *Russian Tetris*, *Night Tetris*, *Mega Tetris*, *Master Tetris*, *Super Tetris*, *Tetris 2*, *Super Tetris 2*... the length of the list is ridiculous. This official Mirrorsoft version is about the best, however, and was released prior to the game's eruption to global fame brought on by the Nintendo Game Boy.



WHAT NOW!



**FIGHTING**

48K

1 PLAYER  
NOVICE

1.4

1000



92%



Coin-op classic *Karate Champ* never really made it into the living rooms of the 1980s gamer, but it's not like we were starved of one-on-one tournament fighter options – *The Way of the Exploding Fist*, by way of a very fine example. Bouts were against another player, or the CPU, pitting you toe-to-toe against increasingly skilful fighters as you worked toward the much-lauded 10th Dan rank. Moves were numerous, requiring precise joystick and button combinations to pull off devastating attacks, and game-changing defences. Accurate hit-detection, smashing visuals and bone-crunching audio conspired to make *Exploding Fist* stand out among its many peers and became the benchmark for fighting games on the Spectrum.

**Game:** Yie Ar Kung-Fu **Publisher:** Imagine Software **Year:** 1985

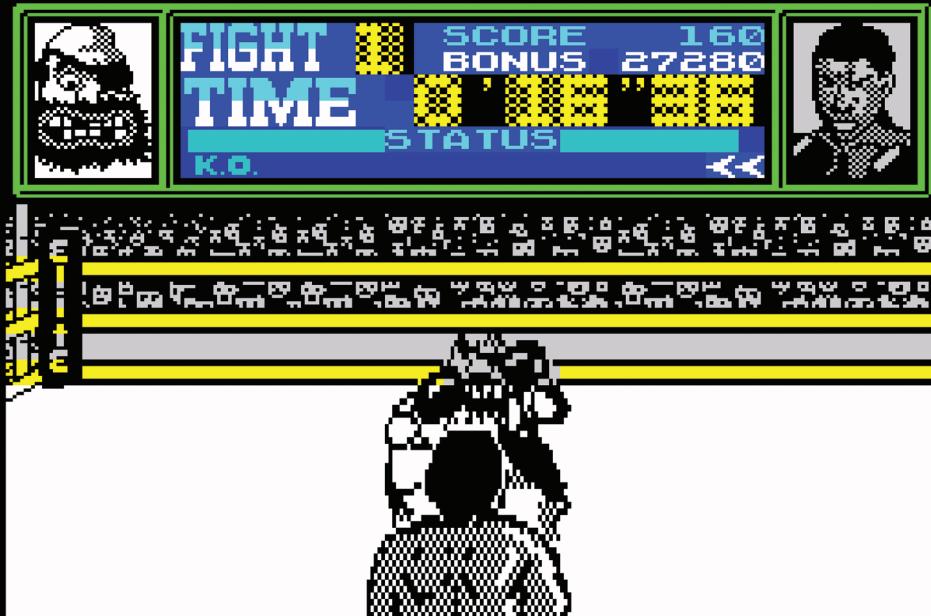


This arcade conversion was one of the first batch of titles that established Ocean's newly-acquired Imagine label as a force to be reckoned with. Following on from the success of Melbourne House's *Way Of The Exploding Fist*, *Yie Ar* is another one-on-one fighter, albeit with a greater variety of opponents. First up is the beefy Buchu, who belies his great size by flying through the air to attack the player, whose name – Oolong – makes him sound like an exotic brand of tea. Taking on various enemies, many brandishing weapons including throwing stars, clubs and swords, Oolong progresses until face-to-face with the kung-fu master himself, Blues. The game was let down by being a little too easy.

48K



86%



**B**oxing games were all the rage back in 1985 and Elite joined the digital ruckus with this decent port of *Super Punch-Out!!* featuring the back of our man Frank's head instead of Little Mac's. Gameplay consists of dealing your opponent blows in the form of left and right head punches as well as body blows whilst dodging punches or ducking, the ultimate aim of which is to wear your opponent down enough for Frank to either get a knockdown or deliver a knockout blow. Mr. Bruno and his opponent are both shown at the top of the screen with health bars which decrease or increase depending on their success in landing blows. When enough blows are landed in quick succession, the KO opportunity presents itself.

Game: Way of the Tiger Publisher: Gremlin Graphics Year: 1986



The *Way of the Tiger* began life not in pixels, but in print. You might well recall the abundance of choose-your-own-adventure game books back then, popularised by the likes of Fighting Fantasy, though a huge number of authors were at work in the interactive fiction realm. Gremlin Graphics took the Scrolls of Ketsuin, which told the tales of a young ninja known as Avenger, and brought him to life in the world of computerised beat 'em-ups. This was always a tricky genre for home computers, and the Spectrum in particular, but the adaptation of *The Way of the Tiger* was a triumph in every respect. It split the game into three distinct parts that each offered a significantly different fighting experience.

48K



n/a



An evil sorcerer by the name of Drax (it's never made clear if he is related to Moonraker Bond villain Hugo Drax) has kidnapped the voluptuous princess Mariana. Playing as the brave ultimate warrior of the title, Drax has agreed to release the princess and call off his ransacking of the Jewelled City should the barbarian best all of his demonic guardians. *Barbarian* isn't the most complex of beat-'em-ups although it has some nice touches of humour, such as a goblin carrying off the bodies of the vanquished enemies and a nice line in graphic decapitations. What made it a best-seller was undoubtedly the brilliantly-judged marketing campaign by Palace. Page Three model Maria Whittaker, dressed in, well, not a lot.



P1 : 00000

HI : 03596

P2 : 00814

When watching Spartacus on the TV, I always wondered what it would be like to go head to head with a sword wielding gladiator; the crowds roaring my name; an arsenal of weaponry to fight with and defeat meaning the end of me! Well *Gladiator* on the Spectrum did its best to recreate the Roman 'pastime' with a total of 25 moves at your fingertips to take out the opposition. The game also allows you to place a bet or two on your fellow fighters whilst watching them duel and to practice your fighting techniques in the local woods. The main part of the game though is surviving the arena and the superb animation of the fighters puts you right in the thick of it!

*sinclair*

128K



## ZX Spectrum +2/+2A/+2B



The ZX Spectrum +2 was Amstrad's first Spectrum and featured a grey case with spring loaded keys, two joystick ports and a built in cassette player named the 'Datacorder'. The ZX Spectrum +2A is a variant of the +3 and the board inside would behave accordingly if a cassette player was attached or a floppy disk controller – cosmetically it looked like the +2 but sported a black case. A revision of the +2 was made, called the +2B, that featured a dedicated motherboard and enhancements to the audio output.





PRINT



ENTER

**RACING**

48K



71%



After playing *Pole Position* at the local seaside arcade, the thought of owning a racing arcade cabinet and playing it at home was every youngster's dream. *Chequered Flag* gave each aspiring James Hunt an opportunity to realise that dream albeit with an element of squinting and a little sprinkling of imagination dust over the Ferguson TV to help the illusion along. With ten tracks to choose from a couple of glaring omissions soon spring to light. There are no roadside buildings, trees, bushes, fences, people – or anything else really – to visually spruce up and add a little realism to your travels. Then you notice you are very much alone; no other budding driver has taken you up on your challenge of the best of three laps.



You may recognise the name of the developer of this game as the very same coder who programmed *3D Deathchase* for the 16K Spectrum (Mervyn Estcourt). There were not too many good racing games available back in 1984 on the Spectrum, and even less racing bike simulators. The crude, flickery graphics of *Full Throttle* were therefore mostly overlooked as you sped around familiar sounding racetracks, such as Donington, that you had seen Barry Sheen shooting around on the TV. The simulation of speed is impressive as the chevron edged track shifts left and right as your bike is manoeuvred around the rather flat surfaces of each location, reaching speeds of up to 175 (mph we presume).

48K

TOP 1000000 TIME SCORE 41860  
STAGE 1 SPEED 179 Km/h



92%



Activision had a variable output on the ZX Spectrum; with *Enduro Racer* it came from nowhere to deliver an excellent arcade racing game that is also vastly superior to the rival Commodore 64 version, making it a good name to bring up in bragging competitions. Based on the popular Sega arcade game, *Enduro Racer* is a dangerous motorcycle race set across five courses, with the task to complete each course in the fastest possible time while avoiding fellow bikers and obstacles. Each stage has its own graphical style and impediments from a tree-lined country road laden with bumps to a desert course complete with a lethal rockfall. Converting the fast-paced arcade game to the Spectrum was a brave move by Activision.

Game: Buggy Boy Publisher: Elite Systems Year: 1988



Coin-op conversions were big business back in the day, although 'conversions' is the wrong word – coin-op interpretations is probably better. Huge compromises were typically made to recreate the latest arcade behemoth on our modest 8-bits, but it was something we expected and accepted. It seems that nobody explained this to the guys behind the Spectrum version of *Buggy Boy*. The Tatsumi coin-op was an imposing racer (the deluxe cab featured three monitors), yet visually the Spectrum version is admirably close, featuring a massive colourful main buggy and loads of chunky sprites. Sadly in motion *Buggy Boy* is on the sluggish side; a racing game stuck in second gear – the Spectrum version though has to be admired.

48K



A sequel to Sega's original motorbike racer *Hang-On*, Spectrum gamers of the day were dubious as to whether or not they really needed another racing game, whether it was on a superbike or not. *Super Hang-On* was competing with the likes of the excellent *Enduro Racer*, which made it to the shelves first, so this home conversion was up against the odds in every respect. Yet it surprised reviewers with the stunning quality and accuracy of its adaptation. *Super Hang-On* was colourful and fast and beautifully balanced. The game was totally fair, so every race won was a genuine victory, and the skills you learned paid off as you sped through Asia, Africa, America and Europe.



**I**t's the game that everyone was playing over Christmas 1987. US Gold's conversion of Sega's coin-op was perhaps the most feverishly anticipated Spectrum game ever, even though the job of converting it with any degree of accuracy was akin to threading a needle with your feet. Yet the game's developers had racing pedigree, having previously impressed with *Nightmare Rally* and *Enduro Racer* for the Spectrum. The preview screenshots looked impressive – mainly monochrome but highly detailed – and there was a real feeling that the game might just replicate the breezy racing bliss that made *Out Run* such an arcade hit. Sadly the end result captured the look but not the feel of the coin-op.



# PLATFORM



There are many examples of games in the early life of the Spectrum where anything goes. A simple idea is thought of and then a prototype gets created that is continually added to until a game pops out the other side. This seems to be the case with *Stop The Express* – a simple idea of a game where you make your way, dressed in your onesie, from the back to the front of a fast moving train whilst jumping between carriages, dodging the bullets from the 'Redmen' and ducking beneath deadly archways. If you trap the red birds that fly by, you can shoot them at the 'Redmen'. Half way along the stretch of carriages, your adventure switches to the inside where it's more of the same – all with a 'thumpety thump' of the tracks below.

Game: Manic Miner Publisher: Bug-Byte / Software Projects Year: 1983



6 031769 is etched into the mind of many a retro gamer. This sequence of numbers activated level select on Bug-Byte's version of *Manic Miner*, giving the player half a chance to see and play the later levels of Matthew Smith's 20-level *Miner 2049er* inspired game. Miner Willy is the star and sees the player guiding him through each screen collecting keys that open up the door to the next level. Sounds simple – the challenge comes from the myriad of madcap enemies that are intent on taking Willy's life; killer penguins, mutant telephones, snapping toilets and, well, odd looking things protect each level and traverse back and forth relentlessly along set paths as you hum along to 'In The Hall of the Mountain King'.

48K



93%



**B**ack in the 80s, Kick Start was a huge TV phenomenon where kids used their biking and balancing skills to traverse a scramble course of barrels, logs and ramps all in the name of entertainment. *Wheelie* could be accused of jumping on the bandwagon somewhat and using a similar formula, but look a little closer and you will find an endearing game with a dark and foreboding edge. There you are, out on the roads one stormy night on your Zedexaki 500 superbike and you inadvertently enter Nightmare Park, a maze of side-scrolling dead ends, abandoned buses and jumps. Your aim is to escape this 'nightmare' – find the Ghost Rider (obviously) and race him to the park entrance and eternal freedom.



n/a



This is about as minimal as gaming can get. Stick man hero Jack is well named, since jumping is all he can do. Your goal is to get him to the top of the screen, through six platforms. Hit a platform from beneath and Jack is knocked out and loses a life. Instead, you must wait for the gaps in the platforms – just two to begin with – to make their way around to where you are. When you get to the top of the screen, you earn two lines from Jack's limerick, and then start over with more gaps. While that makes it easier to ascend, it also makes it easier to fall back down. That's really all there is to *Jumping Jack*, a true relic of Speccy gaming's first awkward years, but that doesn't mean it's without merit.



When thinking of *Booty* these days you could be forgiven for thinking of Beyoncé or maybe Jennifer Lopez. I digress. The kind of *Booty* that this game references is the type pirates look for within the caves of islands far, far away. That's it, treasure me 'arties. Fundamentally a platformer, *Booty* was the first title released by Telecomsoft on their budget Firebird label and sees you, the cabin boy, making your way through the ship's holds. Each step of the way is blocked by doors that are opened by finding the correctly numbered key in the hold. In total there are 20 holds to explore and there is plenty of loot to be collected on the way as you hum along to 'The Sailor's Hornpipe' (more commonly known as the tune from Blue Peter).

**Game:** Jet Set Willy **Publisher:** Software Projects **Year:** 1984



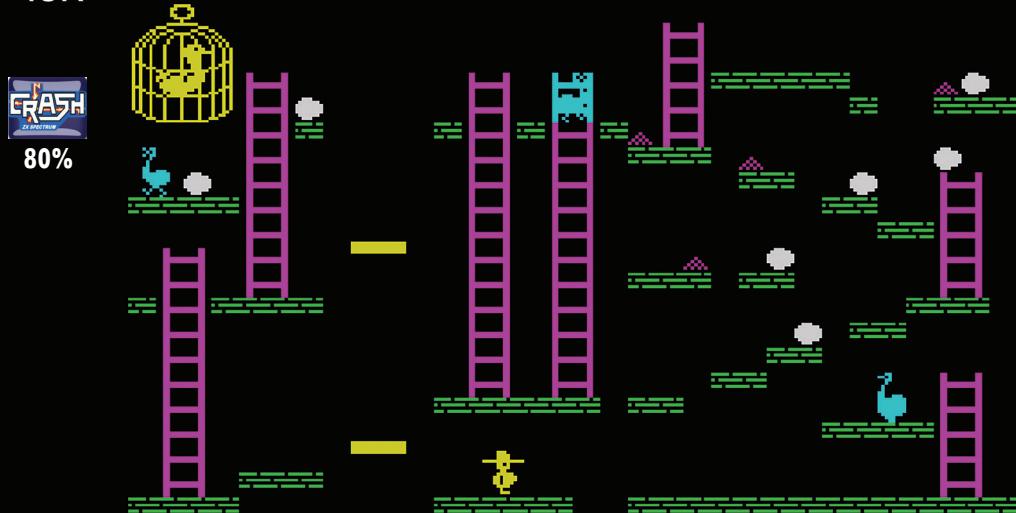
Items collected 006 Time 7:05am



The wonderful, warped mind of Matthew Smith returns to bring us *Jet Set Willy* where Miner Willy, our enduring hero, is trying to get to bed after a pretty full on party at his 60-room mansion. His housekeeper is not too impressed with the after party carnage and sends Willy on his way to clear up the mess before he can rest. And so your adventure begins – a huge sprawling re-imagining of everything that made the original *Manic Miner*, so special and much, much more. Each room has a new assortment of enemies to consider – razor blades; flying pigs; floating barrels; alien blobs; cutting saws (to name but a few). Spectrum Fact #96: The game was number one in the charts for months, that is until *Sabre Wulf* was released.

SCORE 006410

48K   PLAYER 1   LEVEL 03   BONUS 2990   TIME 895



**H**en-House Harry (now there's a name) is our egg-gathering protagonist who has the task of running through eight barns, collecting a dozen eggs in each. The hens that inhabit each of the buildings are pure evil and will peck Harry's eyes out as much as look at him. It may be because, as well as nicking their eggs, their food scattered around the levels is nabbed by our hero as he runs past as well. It's not made clear what is going to happen with all the collected eggs and seed. It's also questionable why a giant caged duck hangs precariously at the top left of the screen. Play through the levels and the duck is freed, only to chase you around the screen with more venom than the chickens.

Game: Roller Coaster Publisher: Elite Systems Year: 1986



As a youngster, going to the fair was a treat – there was always so much to do, including playing all the latest arcade machines. *Roller Coaster* taps into the sounds and sights of a typical theme park as you take control of the old Colonel as he explores his land of pleasure, collecting up the money bags strewn in and around the many rides and stalls that are typical of this kind of establishment. *Roller Coaster* is a platformer at heart and the many ways of losing one of your limited lives in the game are quite unique – being hit by a dodgem, frazzled on the electric lines of the roller coaster or even drowning in the water of the log flume are some of the imaginative ways of meeting your maker.

48K



85%



MONEY :



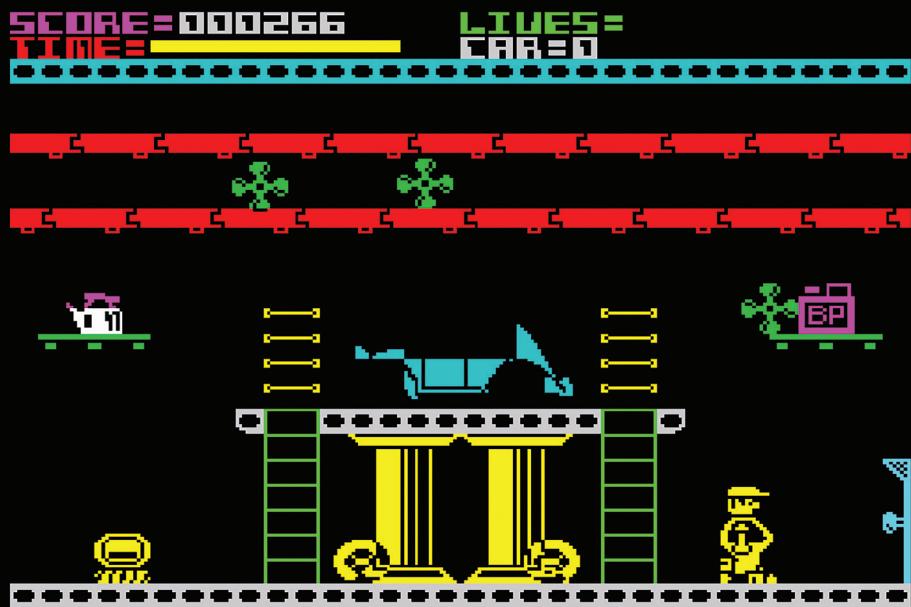
**A**lthough it's a long time since he popped his head above ground, Monty was something of an unofficial mascot for the Spectrum. This was his fourth outing, and arguably one of his best. He's out and about looking for somewhere new to live and has opted for the Greek island of Montos. He doesn't just want to live there, of course. Monty's had a busy life in the public eye (of Speccy gamers) and wants to buy the place so he can retire. Collecting the money and goodies required to seal the deal means a platforming adventure across all of Europe and his adventures are rife with the kind of salacious humour and pop culture references Monty was famous for. What a wonderful way to say goodbye to our favourite mole!



You would be hard pushed to find a better loading screen than the one displayed on *Rainbow Islands*. Though it's considered to be the follow-up to *Bubble Bobble*, you won't find any dragons, bubbles or two player modes here. Despite these apparent shortcomings, *Rainbow Islands* should be considered a monumental triumph in its own right. Climbing toward the top of the multi-platformed levels, a host of cute creatures, vehicles and monsters were dispatched by shooting them with a short-range rainbow or, in order to collect gems from their downfall, dropping a rainbow on them from above. So one of the finest games ever made, and one that continues to live up to that glorious accolade.



Matthew Smith's huge hit, *Jet Set Willy*, spawned a lot of wannabe hits. *Technician Ted* is one such title, but its design, graphical flair and premise put the game at number 84 in the Your Sinclair's top 100 games back in 1992. Ted has to explore a myriad of factory rooms in the search for chips (of the silicon type) whilst dodging all sorts of objects, some of which are no doubt the cousins, aunties and uncles of those found in *Manic Miner* and *Jet Set Willy* on a day trip out. In some of the rooms, there are even some subliminal references to Mr Smith's games – see if you can find them. *TT* is a thinking man's *JSW* with each room needing careful consideration and strategy just to get through.



Wally Week is an institution on the ZX Spectrum starring in many of Mikro-Gen's most successful titles – mostly on his own, on one occasion with all his family in tow in *Everyone's a Wally*. *Automania* is where Mr Week was introduced to the unsuspecting Spectrum gamer and the premise of the game is to build a car from parts found in the stock room. Sounds simple enough – the problem Wally faces is that the car factory is populated with killer robots, bouncing tyres and car parts that fall from the overhead gantries that kill on contact. When all six parts of the car are fitted in place, the car is driven off and replaced with a further part-built vehicle. Wally is also beautifully animated.

sinclair

128K





## ZX Spectrum +3

The +3 looked the same as the +2B but featured a built-in 3-inch floppy disk drive instead of a cassette player. Core changes to the hardware caused incompatibilities with older 48K and 128K games. The Interface 1 and Microdrive were also not compatible due to differences in the expansion adaptor. A revision of the +3 was made, called the +3B, that featured a dedicated motherboard and enhancements to the audio output.

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# FUSION RETRO BOOKS



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